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### Theodore Engelder, 1865—1949

On June 23, 1949, the rich and full life of Dr. Theodore Engelder came to a blessed end. We can probably pay him the greatest tribute by enrolling his name with those of his two illustrious predecessors in the chair of Dogmatics at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Walther-Pieper-Engelder were the great dogmaticians who under God were largely instrumental in developing and preserving a Christ- and Bible-centered theology during the first century of our Synod's history (1847—1947, the year of Dr. Engelder's retirement). The Lord had endowed each of these dogmaticians with special gifts and talents for their highly important office. Dr. Engelder, no less than his predecessors, though in a different manner, was peculiarly equipped to serve the Church as teacher of Christian Doctrine. He shared with his predecessors the unswerving loyalty to God's Word and a deep zeal for the welfare of Christ's kingdom. While he did not possess the dynamic personality of a Walther or a Pieper, he was blessed with other traits which gained for him both the sincere respect and the lasting friendship of all who knew him. His capacity for logical analysis, his painstaking thoroughness, his precision in dogmatical formulations, made him a dogmatician par excellence. His sense of humor, his evangelical character in dealing with such as differed from him, his perennial youth, his unaffected approachableness, inspired love and confidence. Dr. Engelder carefully budgeted his time between work and play: he worked hard and long hours, but he had time for outdoor activities. He employed a unique but withal a very effective filing system, as is reflected in his written articles. His students report that he invariably opened his lectures with: "Luther says," and then he would

quote an appropriate statement from Luther's writings. Those who were closely associated with him have lost a real friend and the Church a real benefactor, who by his lectures in the classroom, his chapel addresses for the students' devotions, his contributions to faculty discussion and committee hearings, and especially by his writings made a lasting contribution to the Church. For years Dr. Engelder was an associate editor of *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY* and furnished the following articles to this magazine and its predecessors:

#### A. Lehre und Wehre

Eine modern-lutherische Dogmatik. Band 73, 135 ff.  
Gedanken eines Unionsmannes. Band 75, 172 ff.

#### B. Theological Monthly

The Lutherans at Lausanne. VII, 353 ff.; VIII, 2 ff.; 37 ff.  
Notes on the Marburg Articles. IX, 101 ff.  
The Troubles of the Interpolationists. IX, 136 ff.; 165 ff.; 204 ff.

#### C. Concordia Theological Monthly

Marburg: der Sieg des Schriftprinzips. I, 99 ff.; 183 ff.; 247 ff.; 321 ff.; 416 ff.; 498 ff.  
Does the Bible Claim Infallible Authority for All Its Parts? I, 107 ff.  
Divergent Teaching on the Plan of Salvation. I, 331 ff.  
The Active Obedience of Christ. I, 810 ff.; 888 ff.  
Ist der Papst der Antichrist? II, 241 ff.  
Zurueck zu Luther! II, 258 ff.  
Ein modern-lutherischer Beitrag zur Eschatologie. II, 641 ff.  
De servo arbitrio. II, 826 ff.  
The Theology of Grace. II, 881 ff.  
Ein Blick in den Betrieb der Erfahrungstheologie. III, 321 ff.  
The Shifting Sands of Science. III, 481 ff.  
Morphologie des Luthertums. III, 667 ff.  
"Intuitu Fidei" und Sola Gratia. III, 801 ff.  
Objective Justification. IV, 564 ff.  
Zur Lehre von der Reue. V, 218 ff.; 369 ff.; 445 ff.; 497 ff.; 584 ff.; 657 ff.  
Notes on Chiliasm. VI, 161 ff.; 241 ff.; 321 ff.; 401 ff.; 481 ff.  
Kirche, Staat, Obrigkeit, Volk, Rasse, Familie — und Gottes Wort. VI, 881 ff.  
Testifying the Gospel of the Grace of God. VII, 1 ff.  
The Principles and Teachings of the Dialectical Theology. VII, 8 ff.; 161 ff.; 241 ff.; 329 ff.; 401 ff.  
Walther, a Christian Theologian. VII, 731 ff.; 801 ff.  
What the Liberal Theologian Thinks of Verbal Inspiration. VIII, 343 ff.; 433 ff.  
Dispensationalism Disparaging the Gospel. VIII, 649 ff.  
Schrift, Bekenntnis, Theologie, Pfarramt und verwandte Gegenstaende. VIII, 736 ff.  
A Course in Lutheran Theology. IX, 241 ff.; 321 ff.; 405 ff.; 481 ff.; 561 ff.; 801 ff.; 881 ff.

- The Inspiration Question. IX, 357 ff.  
 Holy Scripture or Christ? X, 491 ff.; 571 ff.  
 The Reformed Doctrine of the Lord's Supper. X, 641 ff.  
 Fighting Liberalism with Blunted Weapons. X, 834 ff.  
 Der Lutherische Weltkonvent. XI, 11 ff.  
 The Unionistic Campaign. XI, 280 ff.  
 Reason or Revelation? XI, 321 ff.; 408 ff.; 481 ff.; 561 ff.; 641 ff.; 752 ff.; 805 ff.  
 Verbal Inspiration — a Stumbling-Block to the Jews and Foolishness to the Greeks. XII, 241 ff.; 340 ff.; 401 ff.; 481 ff.; 561 ff.; 801 ff.; 881 ff. XIII, 7 ff.; 161 ff.; 241 ff.; 414 ff.; 481 ff.; 561 ff.; 731 ff.; 811 ff.; 888 ff.  
 The Reunion of Christendom. XIV, 313 ff.; 385 ff.; 457 ff.; 601 ff.; 745 ff.; 817 ff.  
 The Right and Wrong of Private Judgment. XV, 217 ff.; 289 ff.; 385 ff.; 433 ff.  
 The Hades Gospel. XVI, 293 ff.  
 The Argument in Support of the Hades Gospel. XVI, 374 ff.  
 The Evil of the Hades Gospel. XVI, 591 ff.  
 Some Remarks on the Question of the Salvation of the Heathen. XVI, 823 ff.  
 Luther the Reformer. XVII, 7 ff.  
 The Protestant Purgatory. XVII, 401 ff.  
 The Catholic-Protestant Limbus Patrum. XVII, 561 ff.  
 The Hades Gospel and the Apocatastasis Gospel. XVII, 641 ff.  
 Haec Dixit Dominus. XVIII, 484 ff.; 561 ff.  
 Is Doctrinal Unity a Luxury? XIX, 516 ff.; 583 ff.  
 All Christians Believe in Justification by Faith. XX, 268 ff. (Translation of a section of F. Pieper's *Dogmatik*.)

Two series in the above list appeared in book form: *Reason or Revelation?* (1941) and *Scriptures Cannot Be Broken* (1944). A gem from his early pen is "The Three Principles of the Reformation" in *Four Hundred Years* (1917). He evidenced his wide acquaintance with modern trends in theology as editor in chief of *Popular Symbolics* (1934) and as author of the section on the Lutheran Church in this volume. As a tribute to his teacher he edited *Walther and the Church* (1938). Dr. Engelder was busy until the very last, working daily on the proposed translation of Pieper's *Christliche Dogmatik*. During the last months he also found time to write the article the first installment of which appears in this issue.

A glance at the topics of articles published by Dr. Engelder will reveal that the doctrine which was dear to his heart was the all-sufficiency of the Bible as the only *principium cognoscendi*. It is our firm trust that he now beholds face to face the mysteries of godliness which he throughout his long life on the basis of God's Word believed, preached, and taught.

THE STAFF

# No Development of Doctrine for Us!

† By TH. ENGELDER †

## I

The popular theology of today stands for the development of doctrine. C. S. Macfarland declares: "Christian revelation is not confined to a closed canon, to a stereotyped letter, or a strictly defined confession." (*Christian Unity in Practice and Prophecy*, p. 27.) *The Living Church*, of Jan. 14, 1933, declares: "There has always been, and under God there always will be, a continual development of experience and doctrine as the Spirit guides the Church into more and more of the truth about Christ. . . . Liberal Catholics believe that it is possible to develop a doctrine of Christ in line with the best modern thought." And John J. B. Morgan declares: "All great thinkers have had to admit over and over again that they were wrong. It is this willingness to change beliefs which marks off the versatile man from the old fogey. Look back, and if you cannot see where you have changed, you can rest assured that you have already stagnated." (*Keeping a Sound Mind*, p. 207.)

The progressive theologians deplore that the Lutheran Church refuses to join with them in the development of doctrine. After John A. Makay had called upon the churches to re-examine their theology and expunge therefrom "what is false and has served its day" (*Christendom*, 1937, II, p. 537), John M. Moore notes on page 575: "Lutheranism still thinks in the dialectic of the Reformation." *The Christian Century*, Feb. 10, 1937, after stating that "in the New Testament there is no unalterable doctrine which embraces the whole scheme of Christian thought," calls upon the Lutherans to fall in line: "The Lutherans should be paged and told about it." Edwin E. Aubrey is pleased to note in his book *Living the Christian Faith* on page 84: "American Christianity gives promise of making significant contributions to the development of Christian theology," and on page 97 he castigates the Missouri Synod and like bodies for their backward stand in theology: "These churches became sects in America. . . . This often meant that



they became fixated in loyalty to an old faith which was being modified and modernized in the old country. The Missouri Synod Lutherans came to be more conservative than the Lutheran Church in Germany and even sent missionaries back to the old country to overcome 'defections' there. In this way the stress of maintaining racial solidarity led to theological reaction."

Now, there are many Lutherans in America — and in "the old country" — who are heart and soul for the development of doctrine. In the past generation the voice of E. H. Delk was loud in the land: "To deny that modern thought has any new truths to offer is to deny the presence and leadership of God. It is a kind of atheism." (*The Lutheran Church Quarterly*, 1912, p. 554.) In the present generation we hear the voice of Abdel Ross Wentz: "The theology of Lutheranism is in no sense fixed or static. When, therefore, a Lutheran of today accepts these Lutheran Confessions, he does not feel that they are a fetter binding him to antiquated ways of thinking." (*What Is Lutheranism?* p. 89.) *Folkebladet*, Jan. 20, 1937: "Christianity must progress to clear knowledge of truth by reason, step by step, according as it finds the truth revealed in the course of history." *The Lutheran Church Quarterly*, 1944, p. 44 f.: "The old, popular, static Biblical theology has no place among American Lutherans. . . . If our apprehension of God's revelation is a constantly growing, self-enlarging body of knowledge, this should be reflected in our systematic theology." The writer of the pamphlet *A Living Lutheran Theology* (1946) is disgusted with the old-style Lutheranism and its insistence on "changeless doctrines," on "eternal, unchanging doctrines," and its claim that "these doctrines are derived from the Bible and set forth in the Confessions of the Church" and that "they must be accepted as true in their minutest points." (Pp. 8, 9, 17.)

But there are plenty of Lutherans — and plenty of Protestants in other denominations — who will have nothing to do with the development of doctrine. These old-fashioned Lutherans believe, in the first place, that the doctrine presented in the Bible is unchangeable. Believing in the absolute authority of Scripture, they consider it a crime to attempt to modify, change, amend, revise, improve, develop, the doctrine "which was once delivered unto the saints." They subscribe

to Dr. Pieper's statement: "There can be no development of the Christian doctrine, because the Christian doctrine given to the Church by the Apostles is a finished product, complete and perfect, fixed for all times. It is not in need of improvement and allows no alteration." (*Christliche Dogmatik*, I, p. 148.) What God, the eternal Truth, set down in Scripture, remains true to all eternity; it cannot be modified, much less supplanted, by some new "truth"; for truth never changes. The old-fashioned Lutherans are content with the doctrines revealed in the Bible just as they are revealed in the Bible. They subscribe to the statement of F. Bente: "We occupy the very same doctrinal position as the Christians of the first century. What, for example, the congregation in Rome or Corinth knew in the year of our Lord 97, or should have known, just that and not one whit more Trinity Church in St. Louis in 1897 knows. . . . Holy Scripture sufficed for the Church in the past and will suffice for the Church in the future." (*Proceedings, Western District*, 1897, pp. 31, 32.) "One who accepts Holy Scripture as God's infallible Word will not dare to add here and subtract there, but will at hearing this Word fall on his knees and say: 'Speak, for Thy servant heareth'" (l. c., p. 44). The old-school Lutherans subscribe wholeheartedly to Luther's statement: "We are not out to invent new things, but hold, and remain with the old Word of God, as the Ancient Church held it." (XVII:1659.) They are not out to reconstruct the doctrine. They know that after Luther and his co-laborers had "reconstructed" the doctrine on the basis of God's Word, no further reconstruction is possible,<sup>1</sup> as Luther declared after the Augsburg Confession had been transmitted: "We must confess that the doctrine preached and confessed at Augsburg is the true and pure Word of God, and that all who hold this doctrine are God's children and will be saved — whether they believe it now or will come to the understanding of it later. This confession will abide to the end of days, to the Last Day." (XVI:1538.) Luther again: "All articles of faith

<sup>1</sup> See Pieper, *Proc., Atlantic District*, 1919, p. 10 f. *CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY*, 1949, p. 383: "Is it really necessary for theology, if it is to be live and active, to produce new systems? Luther did not produce anything new in the line of doctrine. His theology was in its fundamental tenets that of the early church councils. . . . This doctrine had become obscured and almost lost in the bewildering mazes of scholastic speculations. Luther rediscovered it through his study of the Scriptures."

are revealed in Holy Scripture, making it unnecessary for man to add some supplements." (XIX:958.)<sup>2</sup>

Every Bible theologian takes this position. There is not a single passage in the Bible, not a single indication, that the doctrine preached by Paul and the other Apostles will in the course of time be changed. The Bible teaches the changelessness of the saving doctrine. There is Jude 3: "Contend earnestly for the faith which was *once for all* delivered unto the saints" (R. V.). And 2 Thess. 2:15: "Brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught." And Col. 2:7: "Stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught." And 2 Tim. 3:14: "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned." And 1 Tim. 6:14: "Keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." And 1 Tim. 1:3: "Teach no other doctrine." And 2 John 10: "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house." And Acts 2:42: "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine."<sup>3</sup> One who takes the Bible for his guide cannot but say that the doctrine given to the Church by the Apostles is a finished product, complete and perfect, fixed for all times.

The doctrine changeless? The great majority of present-day theologians indignantly protest that idea and declare: Let the Bible say what it will, the doctrine of the Church is, like everything else in this world, subject to change. *The Christian Century*, Feb. 10, 1937: "There is no unalterable doctrine . . . no system of doctrine which shall be valid to all eternity."

<sup>2</sup> Be sure to read the series of articles by Walther: "Was ist es um den Fortschritt der modernen lutherischen Theologie in der Lehre?", in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1875, 1876, 1878, also: "Die falschen Stuetzen der modernen Theorie von den offenen Fragen" in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1868, p. 97 ff. ("The False Arguments for the Modern Theory of Open Questions," *CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY*, 1939, p. 254 ff.)

<sup>3</sup> There are hundreds of passages of like import. Dr. H. E. Fosdick preached on the text 2 Tim. 4:7, "I have kept the faith," and expounded the theory that the great Apostle's proudly cherished fidelity consisted in an ability to look forward and not chain himself to what was past. *The Lutheran*, Jan. 15, 1931, commented: "If there is anything in the whole letter (2 Timothy) that is outstanding, it is the aged Apostle's reference to and insistence upon the integrity and unchangeableness of the truths received by him from God by revelation. . . . In other epistles he declares his fidelity to 'the gospel', than which there is no other, 'even though an angel might preach it'. . . . He has contended for it bravely. He has kept it faithfully. He has transmitted it just as it was received. Thus 'he has kept the faith.'"

G. A. Buttrick: "How could God, so radiant and vital in His own right, be imprisoned in the past? And what is this doctrine of an inerrant Book but the assertion that God spoke then and cannot speak now, the avowal that the Everlasting is the captive of antiquity?" (*The Christian Fact and Modern Doubt*; see CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY, 1941, p. 223.) Edwin Lewis: "Faith may never be expected to assume a final form. . . . The Christian minister must remember that his age is the twentieth century and not the thirteenth or the fifth. . . . The Gospel must be set free from certain archaic wrappings" (*The Faith We Declare*, pp. 150, 180, 182). H. E. Fosdick: "Of course there are outgrown elements in Scripture — a man must be able to recognize the abiding messages of the Book in a transient setting. . . . This Gospel of God revealed in Christ, released from literal bondage to old categories and set free to do its work in modern terms of thought and speech, ought to be the central affirmation of our preaching" (*The Modern Use of the Bible*, pp. 94 f., 261.) Again: "Multitudes of reverent Christians, for the sake of intellectual and spiritual integrity, have been trying to see this new knowledge in terms of the Christian faith and to see the Christian faith in terms of this new knowledge." (*The New Knowledge and the Christian Faith*, p. 4.) Karl Barth: "Von der Antwort, die das Wort Gottes gibt, koennen wir niemals als von einer fertigen Groesse reden. . . . Es ist unmoeiglich, dass das Wort eine ein fuer allemal geltende Erkenntnis bietet." (See Luthardt-Jelke, *Kompendium der Dogmatik*, p. 53.) The Bible never claimed to be a finished product. Robert F. Horton: "The idea of a Revelation confined to the Sacred Writings cannot be said to be the idea of those Sacred Writings themselves. . . . From this mental activity working in the plastic material of St. Paul's own rich spiritual growth was produced what might be called a tentative theology . . . tentative, not final or complete, for nothing which St. Paul says gives an idea that theology was to close with him, or that the same spirit that worked mightily in him would cease to work in the Church or in other Christian men after he had gone." (*Revelation and the Bible*, pp. 16, 297.) Christ Himself did not speak the final word in theology. R. W. Sockmann: "Can we say that the Christ of Nazareth has given us the final wisdom? May not the future outgrow Him? . . . He was the child of His time." (*Recoveries in*

*Religion*, p. 70.) Henry J. Golding, a leader of the New York Ethical Society, declares: "Yet even Jesus does not represent all the best we know. No one personality, however radiant and moving, can embody all the excellences," just as Fosdick declared "When one appeals across the centuries to the religion of Jesus, one does not mean to ascribe finality even to that, as though God had not spoken since, as though no new light had broken on the world." (See *THEOL. MONTHLY*, 1927, p. 179.) And so *ad infinitum*. The radical wing of the popular theology of today as well as the "conservative" wing, here and in the old country, disavows the idea that the saving doctrine has been set down in Scripture in a fixed form.

They cannot do otherwise. They have discarded the principle of the sole authority of Scripture and have substituted for it the authority of man — call it the authority of reason or of experience or what you will. They are walking in the footsteps of Schleiermacher. Dr. Patton, in *Fundamental Christianity*, thus characterizes Schleiermacher's position: The New Testament is the record of the Christian consciousness of the apostolic age; but the Christian consciousness of the apostolic age may be different, and, in so far as it may differ, it has a right to supersede the record of the Christian consciousness of the early Church. The outcome of this principle would be that, the Christian consciousness being in a state of constant flux, no one can predict what the consciousness of the next age will affirm, and therefore no one can put much confidence in what the Christian consciousness of the present age affirms." (See *THEOL. MONTHLY*, 1926, p. 373.) J. H. Leckie puts it this way: "This common consciousness, this generalized experience of the religious mind . . . is an active force which develops, tests, enriches, and applies the word of Revelation. . . . The corporate consciousness makes a liberal use indeed of its function as interpreter of the Gospel; for it silently drops and rejects such things in the Record of Faith as it cannot use or apply. . . . It is influenced from age to age by social and political surroundings, by the changing needs of practical life, by the scientific and philosophical teaching that from time to time prevails, and by the judgments of experts and scholars." (*Authority in Religion*, p. 131.) And E. H. Delk, of course, subscribes to the principle of the authority of man: "The final appeal is made to the Christian consciousness. . . . These have always stood



clear-eyed and honest champions of the necessity and right of Christian experience to interpret and enforce the truths of our holy faith. . . . Personal experience must be supplemented and balanced by other personal experiences in order to group the whole human spiritual experience. It is this fact which makes theology a progressive science and religion a life." (See *Lehre und Wehre*, 59, p. 157.) It is by sharing each other's consciousness and experience that the reconstructionists get their new theology. Dr. Douglas Horton told us: "The Amsterdam assembly will meet with the same seriousness and the same purpose that it would have if a messenger from on high had summoned it together. The men and women gathered in the Dutch city from 148 denominations of Christians will first of all pray, and then they will seek God's will by sharing their insight with each other in discussion." (See the *Christian Beacon*, Aug. 5, 1948.) Is it any wonder that the reconstructionists are kept very busy? The Christian consciousness of one generation, they say, differs from the preceding one, and before they have finished emending the doctrine to suit one generation, the consciousness of the next generation is calling for a revision. It is an endless task; but they are convinced that they are serving God.

The Bible theologian will have nothing to do with this work. He will not compete with God in setting up the saving doctrine. He says with Dr. Patton: "To the modernist the *ego* is the real norm of religious truth. Modernism has abandoned the objective basis of Christianity. . . . We believe that that is the norm on which the experience of the inner life must be based — the truth revealed and recorded. . . . The religious 'experience' is based on an inflated feverish emotion, with its dangerous delusions and imaginations, unless it is founded on the rock of truth, stable as the eternal hills." He says with W. M. Robertson: "Experience, it is held, is to determine what is true; doctrine is but the reflexion of the varying words of Christian experience; fixity or finality in doctrine is impossible; what may be right for us today may be wrong for those who follow tomorrow. . . . But if doctrine is simply the garment in which a varying experience clothes itself from time to time, we may have religious experimenting, but doctrine as distinctive truth can never exist. Some of us are old-fashioned enough to believe that the great value of Christianity lies in its truth-



fulness, in divine actualities on which we can lay our hands and stay our hearts." (*Crucial Questions*, p. 63 ff.) He says with J. G. Machen: The reconstructionists hold that "there is truth for this generation and truth for that generation but no truth for all generations. . . . Every generation has its own thought-forms and cannot by any chance use the thought-forms of any other generation. . . . I think we may safely resist the skepticism which holds that the convictions of one generation can never by any chance be the convictions of another. . . . If it were true, then books produced in past generations ought to be pure gibberish to us." (*The Christian Faith in the Modern World*, pp. 90—95.)<sup>4</sup> The Bible theologian says with Luther: "Es ist nie keine Predigt oder Lehre in der Welt gewesen, das so viele Meister haette gehabt als eben das Wort Gottes. Es ist niemand, der sich nicht duenken laesst, er koenne Gottes Wort meistern" (VIII:9), but: "I have no right to assume authority over the Word of God" (VIII:35), and: "The doctrine is not ours, but God's" (IX:644).

The attitude of the Schleiermacherian reconstructionists is marked by proud self-sufficiency. William Temple, Archbishop of York, says: "We shall not suppose that it is the task of the Christian theologian to go on saying in every generation what was said by all his predecessors" (quoted in Macfarland, *Trends of Christian Thinking*, p. 145). The attitude of the Bible theologians is marked by humble submission to Scripture. "We are catechumens and pupils of the Prophets — let us simply repeat and preach what we have heard and learned from the Prophets and Apostles." (Luther, III:1890.) No development of doctrine for us!

One of the chief arguments of the revisionists is that as everything else in this world is subject to change, the Christian doctrine, too, is ever changing. Science is progressive, and so the teaching of the Church must be progressive. It is "influenced by the scientific and philosophical teaching" (Leckie). V. Ferm: "Much water has passed under the bridge since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. . . . We must make readjustments with the findings of the best Biblical scholarship and interpretation, with the best recent scholarship." (*What Is Lutheranism?* p. 279 f.) D. Maurice Allan, in

<sup>4</sup> The aberrations of these theologians do not invalidate their correct principle.

the *Presbyterian Outlook*: "Why should new truth unfold in the scientific realm and not in the spiritual? . . . God is now speaking to the Church and imparting new truth as genuinely as He did at Pentecost." (See the *Christian Beacon*, Feb. 26, 1948.) But these analogies are fallacious.

Science, for instance, changes from generation to generation,<sup>5</sup> because all scientists are fallible men, and their findings are not the absolute truth. But the doctrines set down in Holy Scripture were revealed by the infallible God and are not subject to revision. Walther: "We will have nothing to do with a science which would play the lady and mistress over against Scripture which . . . wants to sit in judgment on it and correct it according to science, which instead of remaining in its sphere wants to make general laws of the laws that happen to apply to its domain and force them on Scripture. Such a μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλο γένος we regard as both idolatrous and unscientific." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1875, p. 1 f.)

And do the changes and amendments to the United States Constitution in any way affect the stability of the Christian doctrine? The *Globe-Democrat* in its issue of Sept. 13, 1942, states that "Jefferson announced the principle that the constitution of a free people should provide within itself an opportunity for each generation to revise it completely." And the commentator of the *Detroit News* said in the issue of July 19, 1948: "The Constitution does not mean today what it meant in 1789. The system set up by the founding fathers was far more elastic than they imagined. . . . The Constitution, as Chief Justice Hughes remarked, is what the Supreme Court says it is. But the Supreme Court sooner or later becomes what the majority of the people desire it to be; and therefore, sooner or later, the Constitution is interpreted according to the popular desire." But it is a gross fallacy to deduce from the elasticity of the Constitution that the Christian doctrine is likewise elastic. The *Detroit News* commentator remarks: "The elasticity of the Constitution is due to the fact that judges are human. They die, they resign, they change their minds. In the Supreme Court the majority of today is the

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<sup>5</sup> An author quoted by Macfarland (*op. cit.*, p. 70) says of science: "I feel at times a sense of the naive in the unconscious assumption among some of my scientific friends that in their area is incontrovertible truth."

minority of tomorrow." The argument of the reconstructionists reduces Scripture to an instrument devised by fallible men.<sup>6</sup> The truth of the matter is, as Werner Elert put it: "We, on our part, must regard every word of man . . . as reformable. Only one thing is irreformable for us and that is the revelation of God." (*The Second Lutheran World Convention*, 1930, p. 62).

And the reconstructionists would reduce the Church to a debating society. According to them every generation is discussing the findings of the preceding generation, amending and changing them, and the next generation will do the same to its findings; no generation is able to guarantee the truth of its doctrine. None of that for us! Walther: "The modern theory, which holds that dogmas are formed gradually, makes the Church a philosophical school, whose task it is eternally to be looking for the truth, while according to the Word of God the Church is the mistress to whom the truth has been entrusted as her most precious treasure, as the good thing which has been committed unto her to keep it by the Holy Ghost, 2 Tim. 1:13, 14; 1 Tim. 6:20." (See CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY, 1939, p. 509 f.) Pieper: "The Church is not a society for the discovery of the saving truth, but a society for the promulgation of the saving truth." (*Vortraege ueber die Ev.-Lutherische Kirche*, p. 146.) And Luther: "What need would there be for a Church of God in the world, of what use would a Church be, if she wanted to waver and be evasive in her message or offer something new every day, now giving something, now taking away something?" (XVII:1340.) Luther again: "When they say they desire to wait until the Church has uttered her voice, let the devil do the waiting; I shall not tarry that long. For the Christian Church has already decided everything." (VIII:100.)

There are certain things which are as true today as in the days of Moses, certain things which with all the advancement in science never become antiquated. We make use, in the words of F. Bettex, of the modern ocean-steamer and the

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<sup>6</sup> L. S. Keyser: "This author [F. W. Bade] will not tolerate the view that any part of the Old Testament was given by direct divine revelation and inspiration. No, it is a 'growth,' a 'human growth,' a 'development of human thought.' . . . The author is committed to the theory of evolution; to him the idea of a direct divine revelation is intolerable." (*Contending for the Faith*, pp. 49, 50.)

like; they are better than the old things; but we have no use for the modern God and the modern Christ and modern Christianity. They may stigmatize us as being antiquated, backward and behind the times. Be it so—we want to be as old-fashioned as the prayer of Moses and the penitence of David and the Sermon on the Mount and the Epistle to the Romans. We are back of the times not only by a hundred years but by 1900 years.—The teaching of the Moral Law remains the same. It cannot be surpassed. In spite of what H. L. Willett says: "It is inevitable that one who studies the Scriptures should bring every statement and precept to the bar of his own sense of right and judge it by that standard. . . . The Book itself does not claim to be a carefully prepared manual of conduct" (*The Bible Through the Centuries*, pp. 291, 294), in spite of what Robert F. Horton says: "We certainly misunderstand the Apostle when we give to this moral teaching with which his writings abound that note of finality and that suggestion of infallibility which would preclude the free operation of the Spirit in revealing other things to us as the ages roll by" (*op. cit.*, p. 302), the moral teachings of the Bible cannot be improved. A commentator in the *Globe-Democrat*, of May 31, 1948, says: "An editor once complained that I peddled platitudes, for which I thank the Lord. After all, the Ten Commandments are a compilation of 'platitudes' which are just as true today as when they were first issued, although many thousands of years have passed since then." The *Moody Monthly* says: "Science has greatly improved living and working conditions, and it is a long step from the sickle Ruth wielded in Boaz's field to the modern harvester. 'But' someone inquires, 'have we improved upon Ruth?'" (See *The Presbyterian*, Jan. 9, 1941.) — And as to the old Gospel, the reconstructionists are busy improving it, but the Christians will not have it changed by one sentence, by one word. They say with Luther in his *Confession of Faith*: "I also believe that such Son of God and Mary, our Lord Jesus Christ, has suffered, was crucified, dead and buried for us poor sinners, whereby through His innocent blood He has redeemed us from sin, death and the eternal wrath of God. . . . This is my faith, for thus all true Christians believe and thus the Holy Scriptures teach us. . . . I beg all pious hearts to bear witness to this and to pray for me that I remain steadfast in this faith to the end of my days." (XX:1096, 1105.)

Let us follow in the footsteps of Walther, who said: "We not only disavow such additions of science to theology as directly contradict the Biblical truth, but, in short, *all* that is meant to *augment* our Biblical theology, for God does not only forbid men to contradict His Word, but just as strictly forbids them to add anything to it, Deut. 12: 32." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1875, Foreword.) At the dedication of the new seminary building in 1883 he declared: "In this building no new doctrines will be developed, but here the old and still eternally young doctrine of Him will be presented who said: 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.'" (See Chr. Hochstetter, *Geschichte der Evangelisch-lutherischen Missouri-Synode*, p. 449.)

There are two more reasons why we cannot engage in the business of developing the doctrine.

(To be continued)

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# An Outline of the First Epistle of John

By MARTIN J. HASZ

The chief isagogical problem of the Epistle is its structure. Dr. R. C. H. Lenski states: "A curious circumstance about the letter is the fact that it seems to have no divisions. Commentators divide it in one way or in another, and state their reasons for such a division; but when one reads the letter, the proposed divisions do not satisfy. They are upset by the series of repetitions and reiterations that occur throughout the letter. That fact makes some interpreters complain about the lack of logic; but this letter has no formal parts, such as we commonly use and expect. It is constructed according to a different and a higher method. . . . John rises above formal divisions and parts. This letter is built like an inverted pyramid or cone. First the basic apex is laid down in 1:1-4; then the upward broadening begins. Starting with 1:5-10 the base rises and expands, and so continues in ever widening circles, as one pertinent thought joins the preceding. Here one block is not laid beside the other, so that joints are made. There are really no joints, not even where the new thoughts are first introduced. The line of thought simply spirals in rising widening circles until all is complete. Keeping from idols (5:21) is only the brief, final touch. This is an unusual structure in writing, but for that very reason it is entirely superior to the common type."<sup>1</sup>

Before we give up the attempt to discover an ordinary form of structure in this Epistle, let us try again. However, we do not chide Dr. Lenski for his low opinion of former attempts nor for his own suggestion. An investigation of various commentaries and books on isagogics reveals a remarkable diversity of opinion as to the structure of First John. Most of them indeed recognize that John states the theme and purpose of the Letter in 1:1-4, especially v. 3, "That ye might have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ," with its resultant fullness of joy, yet they unanimously fail to carry out this theme in the parts which they suggest.

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<sup>1</sup> *Interpretation of Peter, John, Jude*, 1938, p. 373 f.



Cartledge is another kind of offender when he writes: "John writes in a most informal way, seemingly following no logical plan. Any analysis of the contents will be satisfactory, but the following is suggested: . . .,"<sup>2</sup> and then places 4:7-12 before 4:1-6 in his outline. To the irreverent the Letter may indeed appear as the repetitious babblings of an old man, but the Epistle certainly deserves a better fate than it has received at the hands of the believing scholars. Even Matthaeus Flacius (Illyricus), described by the *Concordia Cyclopaedia* (*sub nom.*) as "the brilliant, keen, thorough, logical, exegetical defender of Lutheranism," thought that this Letter consisted of only loosely connected aphorisms.<sup>3</sup> Thiessen's 12 parts are not much of an improvement on that.<sup>4</sup> Luecke is somewhat better, with only eight chief parts.<sup>5</sup> Braune, on the other hand, oversimplifies by giving only two chief parts (I. God is Light, II. He that is born of the righteous God does righteousness).<sup>6</sup> Bengel tried hard to base his divisions on the spurious "Comma Johanneum."<sup>7</sup>

But let us not despair because of these previous failures. The Letter may well be likened to a complicated musical fugue into which various themes are woven, which recur again and again. These repetitions emphasize the importance of Christian knowledge, Christian love, and Christian faith in all the aspects of a Christian's life, especially in respect to his continuance in fellowship with the Apostles, with the Christian Church, and thus with Christ and the Father. This Letter has a timeless timeliness, which makes it very applicable to our day also, with its worldliness and unionistic indifference to pure doctrine. The Epistle is solid meat (like Al Capp's "shmoo"; perhaps that is why the commentators have had such a hard time in finding its skeleton). The following outline is presented not as the final solution of a problem that has baffled centuries of Christian scholarship, but as an incentive for other Bible students to try their skill at determining the structure of this important and instructive Epistle.

<sup>2</sup> *A Conservative Intr. to the N. T.*, 1938, p. 168.

<sup>3</sup> Huther in Meyer's *Kommentar*, XIV, 3. Aufl., 1868., p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Intr. to the N. T.*, 1944, p. 310.

<sup>5</sup> *Kommentar*, 3. Aufl., 1856, par. 4.

<sup>6</sup> In Lange's *Theol.-Homil. Bibelwerk*, 1865, XV.

<sup>7</sup> In Meyer's *Kommentar*, loc. cit.

## OUTLINE OF 1 JOHN

*Prologue: Theme and Purpose, "That ye might have fellowship with us." 1:1-4*

I. JOHN WARNS OF THINGS THAT DISRUPT  
THIS FELLOWSHIP. 1:5—2:28

A. Unchristian life (polemic against Nicolaitans). 1:5—2:17.

1. Hypocrisy of nominal Christians who walk in darkness. The real Christian confesses his sins, seeks forgiveness, and abides by God's commandments. 1:5—2:2.

2. Antinomian attitudes reveal ignorance of God rather than the superior "Gnosis" that they boast about. 2:3-7.

3. Hatred toward the brother is another proof that they have no fellowship with God, but walk in darkness. 2:8-14.

4. Love of the world will crowd out love for God and fellowship with Him, such as Christians have. 2:15-17.

B. Antichristian teaching (polemic against Cerinthus). 2:18-28.

1. It excludes them from God's fellowship. 2:18-23.

2. But Christians will remain faithful to the Word, which they have received by the ministration of the Spirit. 2:24-28.

II. WHAT THIS FELLOWSHIP MEANS TO THE  
CHRISTIANS. 2:29—3:22

A. They already are God's children, with more blessings to come. 2:29—3:2.

B. A life of sanctification conformable to this divine sonship. 3:3-10.

C. Love for one another, not in word only, but in deed and in truth. 3:11-18.

D. Assurance of forgiveness in answer to their prayer. 3:19-22.

III. HOW THIS FELLOWSHIP IS DEMONSTRATED.  
3:23—5:1

A. By faith in His Son Jesus Christ. 3:23-24.

B. By the orthodoxy of this faith. 4:1-6.

C. By love for the brethren. 4:7-12.

D. By confessing our faith at the Spirit's prompting. 4:13-16.

E. By true love for God (confidence, love for man). 4:17—5:1.

IV. THE PROOF OF THIS FELLOWSHIP. 5:2-12

A. The subjective proof. 5:2-5.

1. Our keeping of the commandment of love.

2. The orthodoxy of our faith.

B. The objective proof. 5:6-12. The witness of the Spirit.

1. Through the birth and death of Christ.
2. Through the Spirit's record — the Word.

V. THE BLESSED RESULTS OF THIS FELLOWSHIP. 5:13-21

- A. The assurance of eternal life. 5:13.
- B. Confidence that He hears our prayers. 5:14-15.
- C. Forgiveness of our sins. 5:16-17.
- D. Protection from all evil. 5:18-19.
- E. Saving knowledge of God. 5:20-21.

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### Luther's Later Attitude Toward the Jews

(Addendum to p. 214 of current volume)

Inadvertently the last one of the conclusions of the author was omitted. With apologies to him we print it here.

"11. The Modern mind which subscribes to the relativity of truth and belittles the 'dogmatism' of Christianity will have little sympathy with the inflexible insistence of Luther that the only answer to the Jewish problem is the conversion of the Jews. At worst the devotees of what is modern will have to assign him a place among medieval bigots. At best they will have to regret his pronouncements on the Jew. The Lutheran Christian who still adheres to a Biblical faith may find the strong language and stringent program of Luther objectionable, but will have to agree that Luther's experiences with the Jews parallel in many ways those of the Apostle Paul, and that after 1900 years there is still no bridge between our present Jewry and Christendom." A.

# Notes on Luther's Conception of the Word of God as the Means of Grace

By JOHN THEODORE MUELLER

Largely perhaps through Karl Barth's emphasis on the *Wort Gottes*, and especially through his admonition to theologians to return to the theology of the Reformation, the doctrine of the Word of God, particularly of the Word of God as it was conceived by Luther, has once more become the special object of theological interest. What Barthian and non-Barthian theologians have written on the point has not always been in accordance with traditional orthodox theology, but the study of Luther in recent years has no doubt contributed much valuable information toward clarifying most historical points and has led many toward a new orientation to conservative Christian belief. In Sweden the Lundensian school of theology has become widely known for its diligent Luther research, and though its viewpoints often are one-sided and miss the real scope of Luther's theology, it is refreshing for the Lutheran theologian to note that it has once more placed into the center of theological discussion forgotten fundamentals of the Reformation, as for example, the *sola gratia*.<sup>1</sup>

Today the student of Luther finds a large library of works on Luther from which he can gain valuable information on the subject in question. We mention only a few of the many older and more recent books that treat of Luther's relation and attitude to God's Word. Outstanding perhaps are such works as Bornkamm, H., *Das Wort Gottes bei Luther*, 1933; Holl, K., *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, 1923; Noesgen, E. F., *Die lutherische Lehre von der Inspiration nach ihrer geschichtlichen Gestalt*, 1909; Preiss, H., *Die Entwicklung des Schriftprinzips bei Luther bis zur Leipziger Disputation*, 1901; Scheel, Otto, *Luthers Stellung zur heiligen Schrift*, 1902; Seeberg, R., *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, especially Vol. IV, 1, 1933, which in a pre-eminent way treats Luther's theology; Walther, W., *Lehrbuch der Symbolik*, 1924; Reu, M., *Luther and the Scriptures*, 1943. This list might be greatly enlarged, but the books listed are

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Faith of the Christian Church* by Gustaf Aulen. Engl. Tr., Muhlenberg Press, Philadelphia, Pa., 1948.

sufficient to show how in recent times theologians again have become vitally interested in what Luther thought and taught concerning the Word of God.

There are, of course, still *lacunae*, and so there remains considerable work for Luther scholars to do in the future. One matter, for example, that deserves more careful attention than it has received is the Reformer's conception of the Word of God as the means of grace. In this article we shall treat this subject chiefly for the benefit of our pastors in their practical work, not in all its ramifications, but simply by pointing out through plain, though not always accessible quotations in English, the great Reformer's basic doctrine of the Word of God and its place in the salvation of sinful man.

# 1

A primary question confronting us in our study is: *What did Luther regard as the Word of God?* It is the merit of Dr. M. Reu that he proved conclusively that while Romanism added to the Bible and Enthusiasm conceived of the Word of God as being independent and beyond the Holy Scriptures, Luther very definitely identified the Word of God with the Sacred Scriptures.<sup>2</sup> Dr. Reu does this in two chapters of his fine book just named: "Scriptures Become the Sole Authority of Luther" (pp. 13 ff.) and: "Scripture Remained Luther's Sole Authority Until the End of His Life" (pp. 49 ff.).

Dr. Reu, for example, quotes such words from Luther as: "Free, free, free would we and should we be in all things that are outside the Scripture. Defiance to him who would stop us." To this Dr. Reu adds in his conclusion of the chapter: "But in all other things his 'conscience is bound by God's Word.'" <sup>3</sup>

Professor Reu introduces the fourth chapter of his book with the words: "And now just a few examples to prove that subsequently the Scriptures were still binding for Luther." On page 55 Dr. Reu writes: "As late as 1544 he (Luther) wrote his *Kurzes Bekenntnis vom heiligen Sacrament*: 'It is not\* certain that he who does not or will not believe one article

<sup>2</sup> Reu, M., *Luther and the Scriptures*, Columbus, Ohio. The Wartburg Press, 1943.

<sup>3</sup> Reu, *op. cit.*, p. 37. W. E. 2, 253.

\* [Sic Reu. According to the original, "not" should be omitted. — Ed.]

correctly [after he has been taught and admonished] does not believe any sincerely and with the right faith. And whoever is so bold that he ventures to accuse God of fraud and deception in a single word and does so willfully again and again after he has been warned and instructed once or twice will likewise certainly venture to accuse God of fraud and deception in all of His words. Therefore it is true, absolutely and without exception, that everything is *believed or nothing is believed*. The Holy Ghost does not suffer Himself to be separated or divided so that He should teach and cause to be believed one doctrine rightly and another falsely.'"<sup>4</sup> In a note to this quotation, on page 148, Dr. Reu cites Luther to this effect: "For all heretics are of this kind: At first they deny only one article, but afterward all must be denied. It is as with a ring; if it has only one defect, it can no longer be used; and if a bell crack in only one place it does not any longer sound, and is useless."

On page 63 Dr. Reu quotes Luther as follows: "Here (II Samuel 23, 2, 'The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue') it becomes too marvelous and soars too high for me. God grant that I may at least partially attain to it, for he (David) here begins to speak of the Holy Triune essence of the divine Godhead. First, he mentions the Holy Ghost; to Him he ascribes all that the prophets foretell. It is these and similar statements to which St. Peter refers in the II Epistle 1, 21, 'For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, etc. . . .' Therefore we sing in the Creed, concerning the Holy Ghost, 'Who spake by the Prophets.' *So we refer all of Scripture to the Holy Ghost.*" — In the same way he [Luther] refers to Dan. 7: 13-14: "So it is the Spirit who speaks through Daniel, for such secret things no one could know if the Holy Ghost had not revealed it through the prophets as we have frequently said before, that *Holy Scripture has been spoken by the Holy Ghost.*"<sup>5</sup>

One must study Dr. Reu's entire monograph to appreciate fully the argument which he makes, namely, that Luther identifies the Holy Scriptures with the Word of God. When Luther speaks in his absolute way of *das Wort Gottes*, he does not mean any word that the Holy Spirit, according to the asser-

<sup>4</sup> W. 54, 158, 21 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Reu, *op. cit.*, p. 63. W. 54 (48), 20 ff.



tions of the Enthusiasts, reveals to them outside and beyond the Holy Scripture, but the very Word of the canonical books of the Old and the New Testament. Nor does he mean any word of which the Holy Spirit convinces the individual subjectively as the Word of God when he studies the Scriptures, but for Luther the whole Bible is objectively God's Word.

Paul Althaus, therefore, does not voice the doctrine of Luther when he says: "The doctrine of inspiration, no matter of what kind it may be, is an expression ossified into a quiescent theory for the pneumatic experience of faith in the Scriptures," but he sets forth a teaching diametrically opposed to Luther's conception of the Bible as the Word of God.<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Reu, of course, could have quoted other passages from Luther which still more conclusively prove the promise that Luther identified God's Word with the Holy Scriptures.

In his exposition of Gal. 1:9 Luther, for example, writes: "No other doctrine should be set forth and heard in the Church than the pure Word of God, that is, the Holy Scripture; otherwise teachers and hearers should be anathema with their doctrine."<sup>7</sup>

In his exposition of 1 Pet. 3:15 Luther writes: "If people do not want to believe [viz., that the Bible is God's Word], you should be silent; for you do not owe it to them to force them that they regard the Bible as God's Book or Word. It is sufficient that you give them your reason for this."<sup>8</sup>

In his exposition of Ps. 22:7 Luther writes: "Holy Scripture is God's Word, written and (that I may so speak) lettered and [that is] formed in letters, just as Christ is the eternal Word of God, veiled in humanity. And just as Christ is regarded and treated in the world, so it has also happened to the written Word of God. It is a worm and no book compared to other books [that is, as unbelievers compare it to other learned books]. For it is not honored by studying, reading, meditation, memorizing, and using, as other writings of men are. If it fares well, it is thrown under the bench, etc. Others tear it up, crucify it, scourge it, and torment it with all sorts of tortures, [while] they explain and twist it to suit their heresy, opinion, and malice, and at last they even destroy it,

<sup>6</sup> *Theologische Aufsätze*, p. 111; C. Bertelsmann in Guetersloh, 1920.

<sup>7</sup> St. Louis Ed., IX:87; Erl., Gal. 1, 90-92; Walch VIII, 1660-1663.

<sup>8</sup> St. Louis Ed., IX:1071; Erl. 51, 449-451; Walch IV, 777-780.

kill and bury it, so that it is cast out of the world and forgotten."<sup>9</sup>

In his exposition of Ps. 40:7 Luther writes: "This is the Book of the Holy Ghost, namely, Holy Scripture, in which we must seek and find Christ. . . . In sum, outside this Book you do not find Christ, may it be as good as it would."<sup>10</sup>

In his exposition of 2 Tim. 3:16-17 Luther writes: "Although there are many books which are profitable and can produce fine, skillful, learned people . . . none can make anyone a man of God. . . . This alone Scripture must do, [which is] inspired and taught by God Himself."<sup>11</sup>

Any student of Luther who takes the time to study his works on this point will easily find many more such expressions in his writings. It would only be carrying coals to Newcastle to illustrate his doctrine concerning the Word of God by more citations. According to Luther, the Word of God is *die Heilige Schrift*, Holy Scripture, that is, the canonical books of the Old and the New Testament. And this Word of God, set forth in Holy Scripture, Luther regarded very highly as God's own precious truth; in fact, to him it was the only divine means of grace.

## 2

Luther's high regard for the Word of God as the only means of grace, that is, as the only means or instrument by which God wishes to deal with sinful man in behalf of his salvation, is proved in practically all his writings.

There is really no need to remind our readers how earnestly and consistently Luther taught that God does not wish to deal with sinful men except through His Word and the Sacraments.

In his Smalcald Articles he writes: "Therefore, we ought and must constantly maintain this point, that God does not wish to deal with us otherwise than through the spoken Word and the Sacraments. It is the devil himself whatsoever is extolled as 'Spirit' without the Word and Sacrament."<sup>12</sup>

Luther thus recognizes no divine operation in the heart.

<sup>9</sup> St. Louis Ed., IX:1770; Erl. 52, 298—301; Walch IX, 1358—1360.

<sup>10</sup> St. Louis Ed., IX:1775; Erl. 52, 303—305; Walch IX, 1363—1365.

<sup>11</sup> St. Louis Ed., IX:1852; Erl. 52, 389—391; Walch IX, 1455—1457.

<sup>12</sup> Smalcald Articles, III, 10; *Concordia Triglot*, p. 497; St. Louis Ed. XVI:1945; Walch XVI, 2359—2362; Erl. (2) 25, 198—200.

of man other than that which takes place through the Word. Luther teaches this both negatively and positively; negatively, by showing what great spiritual perdition prevails wherever God's Word is not in use; positively, by exalting the power and blessings of the divine Word.

Luther in his writings bestows considerable attention on the wretched conditions which are found wherever God's Word is not known and not active in men.

In his sermon on Luke 5:1-11, delivered in 1534 at his home on the fifth Sunday after Trinity, Luther writes: "Wherever God's Word is not found, there is no true blessing, but there only (God's) curse and disfavor must be found and a troubled conscience."<sup>13</sup>

In his sermon on Matt. 2:1-12, preached in 1532 on Epiphany Sunday, Luther says: "Every work which Christ does is comprehended in the Word; and in the Word and through the Word He wants to give us everything, and without the Word He does not desire to give us anything."<sup>14</sup> A few lines farther, he says: "But where we discard the Word and speculate without and outside the Word, reason is a very uncertain, slippery thing."

This thought runs through all popular and learned works of the Reformer and is the foundation of his *sola fide*. Luther admits that without the revealed Word there, indeed, exists to some extent a *iustitia civilis*, for there God rules men through the Law inscribed in the human heart at creation, though he admits that not even in civil affairs man's (moral) powers have remained uninjured, a fact that is proved by the general contempt of man for law and order.<sup>15</sup> In spiritual matters, however, things are much worse; for spiritually, because of original corruption, man by nature is dead in trespasses and sins and so eternally lost unless God approaches him by His Word and rescues him from his state of blindness, spiritual death, and eternal damnation.<sup>16</sup>

Positively, Luther almost goes to extremes in describing

<sup>13</sup> St. Louis Ed., XIIIa:756; Erl. 2, 430-432; Walch XIII, 168, 301-686.

<sup>14</sup> St. Louis Ed., XIIIb:1556; Erl. 4, 205-207; Walch XIII, 312-314.

<sup>15</sup> St. Louis Ed., V:481; Erl. 19, 16-18; Walch V, 685-688.

<sup>16</sup> Whatever Luther has taught on this score is well summed up in his fine explanations of the Second and the Third Article in the Small Catechism.

the wonderful deeds of salvation which God works through the Word. This is a theme which Luther exalts in all his writings, so that his whole theology becomes an unqualified "Theology of the Word," not indeed in a Barthian sense, which Luther certainly would have rejected as *Schwaermerei*, but in its true Biblical and Christian sense.

Luther, for example, writes in his sermon on John 3:16-21, preached in 1532 on Pentecost Monday: "In this world we do not see Him, but we must hear Him in the Word. The Word, which is being preached concerning Him, that must do these things [that is, give us God's Son as our Present and Gift]. This we must heed against the Anabaptists and Enthusiasts, who despise the Word."<sup>17</sup> Just before this Luther said: "The only begotten Son of God is preached (to us) through the Word as our Present and Gift."

In a sermon on Mark 7:31-37, delivered in his house in 1533, Luther writes: "For this reason let everyone take heed that he might let himself be found [by Christ] in this way and (so) hear God's Word gladly. For God does not want to reveal Himself in your heart without the Word. Would you see and know Him, it must be done alone through the Word and the external Sacraments; otherwise, the Holy Spirit does not desire to do His work (in you)."<sup>18</sup>

In his "Table Talk" Luther states very emphatically: "I want no vision; I admit no miracle; I would not believe an angel who teaches me anything else than God's Word. . . . I want the Word! I want no miracles! Erasmus, on the other hand, desired miracles, because he did not keep the Word, although he had the Word."<sup>19</sup>

In a sermon on John 20:19-31, delivered in his house in 1534, Luther says: "God's Word is the true sanctuary, by which the Christian Church and all Christians and saints of God are sanctified. The sanctuary at Jerusalem, and wherever else one might be in the world, is nothing but mere dirt compared to this sanctuary."<sup>20</sup>

In another sermon on John 20:19-31 Luther says: "It is not without a reason that I urge the Word at all times. For it is

<sup>17</sup> St. Louis Ed., XIII:2091; Erl. 5, 217-219; Walch XIII, 1476-1479.

<sup>18</sup> St. Louis Ed., XIIIb:2321; Erl. 5, 445-447; Walch XIII, 1902-1905.

<sup>19</sup> St. Louis Ed., XXII:32.

<sup>20</sup> St. Louis Ed., XIIIb:1942; Erl. 5, 73-75; Walch XIII, 1208-1210.

sure [Luther: *beschlossen*] that by no work, penance, confession, satisfaction we can overcome sin; but all we can do, even though we should torture ourselves to death, is vain and unavailing."<sup>21</sup>

In his "Preface to the First Part of His German Books," written in 1539, Luther writes: "So you see in this Psalm [119], how David always boasts that he wants to read, compose, speak, sing, hear, read, day and night and always, but nothing than alone of God's Word and His commandments. For God does not want to give you His Spirit without the external Word. Be guided by that, for He did not command it, in vain, externally [Luther's antithesis here is the internal word of the Enthusiasts] to write, preach, read, hear, sing, say, etc."<sup>22</sup>

In his exposition of Zech. 14:14-19 Luther says: "For indeed there is no greater grace on earth than where God's Word is being preached. Again, there is no greater misery than where God's Word is not being preached. . . . For where God's Word does not pour down [Luther: *regnet*], there can be no good thing, neither thought, word, nor work, and all work and labor is lost."<sup>23</sup>

There are many other expressions of Luther that might be quoted in this connection, because they prove how highly Luther regarded the Word of God as the bearer and means of divine blessing or, as we usually say, as God's means of grace. But this raises another question, and one that is of the greatest importance. It may be well for us to give it due consideration in a special paragraph.

### 3

The question is: *What Word of God did Luther properly regard as the means of grace?* Already in some of the quotations that we considered above the answer to this question is partly suggested. Luther indeed had a high regard for the Law of God. While John Brenz in his Catechism followed this order: Baptism, Creed, Law, Prayer, Lord's Prayer, an order that became well established in Wuerttemberg, as we are informed, Luther adhered to the traditional order: Law, Creed, Lord's Prayer, Baptism, Lord's Supper. Luther, as is well known, was by no means a legalist. His very work as a Re-

<sup>21</sup> St. Louis Ed., XIIIb:1956; Erl. 5, 88-90; Walch XIII, 1197-1201.

<sup>22</sup> St. Louis Ed., XIV:435; Erl. 63, 403-405; Walch XIV, 422-425.

<sup>23</sup> St. Louis Ed., XIV:1973; Erl. 42, 357-360; Walch VI, 3580-3582.

former, witnessing against Rome's disastrous nomism, made it necessary for him in his whole teaching and preaching to place the emphasis on the Gospel. Otherwise there could not have been the Lutheran *sola fide*. But Luther by no means desired to have the Law abolished. In fact, the antinomian aberrations, championed by eminent theologians, such as Agricola and others, forced him to defend the Law in the Church on Scriptural grounds and to assign to it its true place and function in the Church.<sup>24</sup>

However, when Luther properly speaks of the divine Word as the means of grace, he properly has not in mind the Law, but the Gospel. It is true that since the expression "means of grace" is an ecclesiastical term, it may be applied in a wider sense to both Law and Gospel, since the Law is the divine Word through which the Holy Ghost prepares the human heart for the reception of the Gospel, not indeed positively, but negatively, by His working in man the knowledge of sin and contrition. In a strict sense, however, the expression "means of grace" denotes the conferring or giving means (*medium δοτιζόν*) by which the Holy Spirit offers, imparts, and seals to sinners the forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation. Thus understood, only the Gospel is the means of grace; and so Luther understood and used it.

That Luther, properly speaking, regarded the Gospel as the only means of grace, is asserted by him in many clear statements.

In his sermon on Luke 18:31-43, preached in 1534 in his house, Luther says: "Wherever there is God's Word, no matter whether it is in Baptism, in Absolution, in the Sacrament [Lord's Supper] there God Himself speaks to us. In Absolution He Himself absolves us from [our] sins. In the Sacrament or the Lord's Supper Christ Himself feeds us with His body and blood. We thus have God's Word in the church, indeed, in the home. Whenever the pastor speaks to us in the church or the father in the house, then God Himself speaks to us."<sup>25</sup>

The very words which Luther here uses show that he has in mind the Gospel which forgives our sins and feeds us spiritually unto life everlasting. In other words, Luther speaks

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Historical Introductions to the Symbolical Books. The Antinomistic Controversy; in *Concordia Triglotta*, pp. 161 ff.

<sup>25</sup> St. Louis Ed., XIII b:1679; Erl. 4, 323-325; Walch XIII, 532-535.



of the Word that gives or imparts grace, and not of the Word which demands, threatens, and condemns, that is, the divine Law.

In his sermon on Matt. 9: 1-8, preached in 1533 in his house, Luther says by way of conclusion: "Learn that forgiveness of sins is found nowhere else than where the Word is. Such Word, however, is in Baptism, in the Lord's Supper, in Absolution, and in the sermon [the word proclaimed]. For this reason also there is forgiveness of sin despite the fact that someone may make a declaration to the contrary. But wherever the Word is, there also faith should be. . . . We know that the Holy Spirit will not execute His work without the Word and Sacrament. We, therefore, dare not despise the Word and Sacrament, but we should and must regard it as great and [indeed] as the most precious treasure."<sup>26</sup>

In Luther's monograph "Against the Heavenly Prophets Concerning the Pictures and the Sacrament," which he published between 1524 and 1525, he writes very emphatically: "So, then, since God has sent forth His holy Gospel, He deals with us in a twofold manner: first, externally; then inwardly. He deals with us externally through the oral Word of the Gospel and through bodily [visible] signs, as, for instance, Baptism and the Sacrament [the Lord's Supper]. Inwardly He deals with us through the Holy Ghost and faith, together with other gifts. But all this in such a way and order that the external thing [Luther: *Stuecke*] should and must precede, and the inward come later and through the external . . . for He does not want to give the Spirit and faith without the external Word and the sign which He has instituted for this purpose."<sup>27</sup>

Since sometimes the term "Gospel" is used in a wider sense, Luther, when necessary, carefully defines what he means by this expression. In his monograph "Concerning the Mass," or, as the title appeared in its German form, "Concerning the Abuse of the Mass," which Luther wrote in November, 1521, and published in January, 1522, he writes: "But if you ask: 'What is the Gospel?' then you can give no better answer than these words of the New Testament, namely, that 'Christ

<sup>26</sup> St. Louis Ed., XIII b: 2445; Erl. 6, 121—122; Walch XIII, 2087—2089; 2100.

<sup>27</sup> St. Louis Ed., XX: 202; Erl. 29, 208—210; Walch XX, 271—273.

has given His body and has shed His blood for us for the remission of sins.' . . . For this reason these words should be inscribed into and impressed upon the heart of every Christian as a brief definition of the whole Gospel, so that he might consider them always and without ceasing exercise, strengthen, and preserve his faith in Christ by them, and (that especially) when he goes to the Sacrament.' " 28

In his sermon on Luke 10:23-37, preached in 1524, which the St. Louis Edition offers, together with a discourse on the Law and Gospel, delivered perhaps in 1522, Luther has this to say on the Law and the Gospel: "I have often told you, my beloved, that the whole Bible is divided into two parts: in Law and Gospel. . . . The Law shows the disease; the Gospel offers the remedy." 29

These and other clear statements, then, prove that Luther meant by Gospel, used in its proper sense, the good news of God's grace in Christ Jesus. This fact Luther emphasizes, especially whenever, in his sermons or other works, he explains Rom. 1:16, which properly treats of the Gospel. Thus, for example, in a sermon on Matt. 21:1-9, Luther says, after having briefly explained the passage: "Here you see that he [Paul] is speaking of the righteousness of faith, and this he calls the righteousness of God, proclaimed in the Gospel, for the Gospel teaches nothing else than that he who believes, has grace (forgiveness of sins) and is justified before God and will be saved." 30

## 4

To Luther, then, the Gospel of Christ, in its proper sense, is the means of grace, by which the Holy Ghost is given to men to work faith and regeneration in them, sanctify them, and preserve them unto everlasting life.

But now we must consider another truth, strenuously asserted by Luther, namely, that the Gospel is God's means of grace *in every way it is applied to man*. It is well for us to give this truth conscientious study.

When Luther thinks of the Word of God, or the Gospel, he first and primarily thinks of it as the message of divine grace proclaimed to men. In fact, Luther so greatly stresses the

28 St. Louis Ed., XIX:1125; Erl. 28, 86-88; Walch XIX, 1372-1375.

29 St. Louis Ed., XI:1548; Erl. 14, 14-17; Walch XI, 2081-2083.

30 St. Louis Ed., XI:16; Erl. 10, 20-22; Walch XI, 22-25.

"oral word," or the proclamation of the Gospel, that it might appear as if he meant that the Word only in its oral proclamation is God's appointed means of grace. This, however, is not the case, though certainly he did regard the preached Word as the means of grace.

Let us, then, study a few passages from Luther in which he asserts that the Gospel as a message proclaimed to men is God's means of grace.

In his sermon on John 20:19-31, preached in his house, Luther says: "This is a great and glorious thing that the mouth of every true pastor and preacher is the mouth of Christ and his word and forgiveness Christ's word and forgiveness. If you have [committed] sin and you confess it and believe in Christ, then the pastor and preacher should forgive this sin in Christ's stead, and the words, which he says to you in the name of Christ, you should receive just as if Christ Himself had spoken to you. For this reason you do well that you call the word of the pastor and preacher, which he proclaims, the Word of God. For the office is not that of the pastor or preacher, but that of God; and the Word, which he proclaims, is also not that of the preacher but that of God."<sup>31</sup>

In his "Table Talk" Luther says: "He (Christ) also has servants and officials, 2 Cor. 5:18-20, whom He sends out into all the world, equips them not with earthly [Luther: *leiblichen*] weapons, but He commands them to preach His Word, and enlightens and strengthens them with the Holy Ghost. These [servants] do nothing else than that they proclaim the Word. By that Christ destroys the kingdom of the devil and builds Himself a Church against which the gates of hell cannot prevail, Matt.. 16:18."<sup>32</sup>

In his sermon on John 4:9-10, held in 1540, Luther says: "But now you have the Word of God in the Church, in books, in your house; and that surely is God's Word, just as if God Himself would speak."<sup>33</sup>

This passage is important, since it places the Word preached by the pastor or minister on the same level as the Word in a book and the Word spoken by parents at home. Luther does not believe that the divine Word is efficacious

<sup>31</sup> St. Louis Ed., XIIIb:1941; Erl. 5, 71-73; Walch XIII, 1205-1208.

<sup>32</sup> St. Louis Ed. XXII:312.

<sup>33</sup> St. Louis Ed., VII:2143; Erl. 47, 220-222.

because of the pastor's call or ordination, but the efficacy is inherent in the Word, just because it is God's inspired Word with which the Holy Spirit is indissolubly connected and by which as His means He works His wonders of grace and salvation as He wills. One can well understand why Luther glorified the office of the Christian minister and extolled the proclamation of the divine Word. Against Rome he had to glorify and recommend it in every way possible.

Nevertheless Luther did not hold that the divine Word was less efficacious if it was read privately by clergy or laity. Had he thought this, he certainly would not have spent so much time and labor on the translation of the Bible. There is, however, one passage in Luther's writings which seems to contradict this, namely, his exposition of Malachi 2:7: "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they [the people] should seek the Law at his mouth." In explaining these words, Luther writes: "The Word is the channel by which the Holy Spirit is given. This passage serves well against the despisers of the oral Word. The lips [of the ministers] are the public receptacle of the Church, in which alone God's Word is being stored. For if it is not publicly proclaimed, then it is lost; and the more it is preached, the more faithfully it is adhered to. The reading does not profit as much as the hearing. The living voice teaches, admonishes, defends, and resists the spirit of error. The devil does not concern himself very much about the written Word of God; but when the word is spoken, then he flees."<sup>34</sup>

At first sight it may appear as if Luther here attributes greater efficacy to the spoken Word than to the written Word, as if it were the living voice of the preacher that rendered it more effectual. But this is only seemingly the case. In the first place, Luther's lectures on Malachi were delivered in 1526, but not published until 1552, hence after his death. Luther, therefore, could not edit the work before it went into print. In the second place, Luther himself indicates from what viewpoint he made this statement, when he said: "This passage serves well against the despisers of the oral Word." He emphasized the preaching of the Word over against those who condemned the preaching of the Word by the pastor. Lastly, there is, of course, a certain amount of truth in what Luther

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<sup>34</sup> St. Louis Ed., XIV: 2172; Erl. XXVIII, 301—303; Walch 3605—3607.

here says; for wherever the divine Word is not preached or taught, there surely it is neglected. The point which Luther here makes is not that the Word read or studied is less efficacious *per se*, but that the living voice of the preacher teaches, exhorts, defends, and resists the spirit of error as this is required under the special prevailing circumstances. For this very reason Christ sent out His Apostles to proclaim His Word: the living divine Word must be applied as it is needed.

Against the Enthusiasts of his day Luther emphasized especially the application of the Gospel in the form of absolution. To the absolute "No" of the Enthusiasts to the perverted absolution of Romanism, Luther responded with a definite "Yes," but rooted it in, and motivated it by, Scripture. Luther taught not the papistic, but the Scriptural absolution, which is nothing else than the application of the Gospel to the penitent sinner. A few passages will suffice to make clear Luther's position on this point. In his sermon on Matt. 9:1-8 Luther says: "You can thus say and instruct others concerning forgiveness of sins [namely], that God in Baptism, in absolution, in the pulpit, and in the Sacrament speaks to us through the ministers of the Church and all other Christians. These we should believe, [and] so we shall find forgiveness of sins. . . . Let this be said of the words which here stand [namely], that God gave to men power on earth to forgive sins." <sup>35</sup>

In his "Second Sermon" on John 20:19-31 Luther says: "If, then, anyone desire forgiveness of sins, let him go to his pastor or, if he cannot get the pastor, to his brother and fellow Christian, whom he knows to have the Word of God and with whom he can find it. There also he shall surely find forgiveness of sins, if only he believe the Word [of absolution] which the pastor or the brother in the name of Christ addresses to him." <sup>36</sup>

The Gospel, therefore, according to Luther, is God's means of grace as applied also in absolution, by which God truly forgives the sins of the penitent sinner.

Similarly also, according to Luther, the Gospel is God's appointed means of grace in its symbolical representation. In his "Sixth Sermon" on John 8:20 ff., preached perhaps in 1531, Luther remarks to verse 21: "And it has been a fine custom

<sup>35</sup> St. Louis Ed., XIIIa:922; Erl. 3, 124-127; Walch XIII, 2085-2087.

<sup>36</sup> St. Louis Ed., XIIIb:1956; Erl. 5, 88-90; Walch XIII, 1197-1201.

that they used to hold before dying persons a wooden crucifix or [also] put it into their hands, by which they could remember and comfort themselves with the suffering and death of the Lord Christ."<sup>37</sup>

In a similar way Luther expresses himself in his sermon on Matt. 24:15-28, in which he says: "So we may comfort ourselves concerning those who died in the papacy [namely], that God finally granted them grace, so that they by the remembrance of the crucifix died and passed away in Christ."<sup>38</sup>

Luther, then, teaches that the Gospel of Christ in every form of its application — in public preaching, in private study, in parental instruction, in absolution, and in Christian symbolism — is God's appointed means of grace. Likewise Luther regarded the Gospel as God's appointed means of grace in its Sacramental use. And this point indeed deserves special consideration in view of the emphasis which Luther placed on the Sacraments.

## 5

Luther thought very highly of the Sacraments and praised and recommended them incessantly. In his "Sixth Sermon" against Carlstadt, one of eight which he preached against this "Sacramentarian" from March 9 to 16, 1522, he writes: "This bread [in the Sacrament] is a comfort for the distressed, a remedy for the sick, life for the dying, food for the hungry, and a rich treasure for all who are poor and needy."<sup>39</sup> Against the Romanists he exalted the oral proclamation as the "greatest divine service." He thus writes in his sermon on 1 Thess. 4:13-18, delivered at Wittenberg in 1532, on the occasion of the burial service of Elector John of Saxony: "You know that the greatest divine service is the sermon, and not only the greatest divine service, but also our best [gift] which we can have in all cases, especially, however, on such important and sad occasions [as the loss of the faithful Elector of Saxony]."<sup>40</sup> Against the Enthusiasts, on the other hand, he emphasized the glory and value of the Sacrament, which Christ instituted for the strengthening of our faith and our final salvation, since for Luther the Sacrament was not Law, but pure,

<sup>37</sup> St. Louis Ed., VIII:183; Erl. 48, 322-324; Walch VII, 2462-2465.

<sup>38</sup> St. Louis Ed., XIIIb:2575; Erl. 6, 250-252; Walch XIII, 2312-2315.

<sup>39</sup> St. Louis Ed., XX:43; Erl. 28, 242-245; Walch XX, 51-53.

<sup>40</sup> St. Louis Ed., XII:2073; Erl. 18, 189-192; Walch XII, 2631-2633.



sweet, and comforting Gospel. He, for example, writes in his exposition of Ps. 111:4: "For what else is Christ's suffering other than pure grace and mercy, which through the Sacrament are offered, presented, and communicated to us. . . . All of which He has once earned for us through His suffering, and He daily presents and gives it to us through His memorial or Sacrament."<sup>41</sup>

So it is, properly speaking, the Gospel that makes the sacred act a Sacrament, that is, a means of grace, in which Christ offers and imparts to us His gracious forgiveness of sins, secured by His vicarious atonement.

Luther thus closes his sermon on John 4:47-54, which in 1533 he held in his house, with the words: "In this way the Gospel of Christ and the Christian doctrine accomplishes all things with few words [the reference is to Christ's words: 'Go thy way; thy son liveth']; for it is God's Word. Therefore it has almighty power and there is nothing that it cannot do, as you learn from the son of the nobleman. . . . And so we should learn to hold God's Word in high esteem and believe it. The same Word we have in the proclamation of the Gospel, in Baptism, in the Sacrament, in Absolution. For this reason we should not despise Baptism, the Sacrament, and Absolution, but regard them as very precious and glorious. If we believe the Word, it will happen to us as it happened to the son of the nobleman, namely, we shall obtain what is promised to us in the Word."<sup>42</sup>

In his work "Concerning Councils and Churches," which he published in 1539, Luther writes: "Just as water becomes a Baptism through the Word of God and a saver unto life eternal, washing away sin and effecting salvation, which is not the nature and power of water; and as bread and wine becomes Christ's body and blood; [and as] through the laying on of hands sins are forgiven according to Christ's institution: so the devil also desires that his jugglery and monkey business [Luther: *Affenspiel*] should be efficacious and accomplish something that is supernatural."<sup>43</sup>

In the context Luther speaks not of the Law, but of the

<sup>41</sup> St. Louis Ed., V:1808; Erl. 40, 224-226.

<sup>42</sup> St. Louis Ed., XIII b:2480 f.; Erl. 6, 157-159; Walch XIII, 2149 to 2152.

<sup>43</sup> St. Louis Ed., XVI:2292 f.; Erl. (2) 25, 437-439; Walch XVI, 2807-2810.

Gospel which makes the sacred acts Sacraments; for the Word of God which Luther here has in mind is the Word of grace and promise by which Christ forgives sins. In short, the Sacraments are means of grace because they are "comprehended in God's command and connected with God's Word."

In his exposition of Deut. 4:28 Luther writes: "Just so the Enthusiasts also speak much of God, of forgiveness of sins, and the grace of God, also that Christ died. But how I may obtain Christ and how grace comes to me so that I may secure it [in short], that we come together, there they say: 'The Spirit must do it alone . . . the external, oral Word, Baptism, and the Sacrament are of no profit, and yet they preach of grace. That, it seems, means to announce to me the treasure and to talk well about it, but [it means also] to take away the key and the bridge by which I may come to the treasure. Now God has ordained that this treasure [forgiveness of sins] should be presented and granted to us through Baptism, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and the external Word. For these are the means and instruments by which we come to God's grace. This they deny.'" <sup>44</sup>

But there is no need for quoting Luther more fully on this point. According to the Reformer, it is the Gospel that makes Baptism and the Lord's Supper Sacraments. Luther, of course, also emphasizes the divine institution of the Sacraments. It is his teaching that the Church has no authority to draw up doctrine outside and beyond Scripture. In his great monograph "Concerning the Babylonian Captivity of the Church," which was published in 1520, Luther writes: "For this reason it is certain that the Church cannot promise grace, because this belongs only to God, and so also it cannot institute Sacraments." <sup>45</sup> But what the Church cannot do, God does and it is because of His divine institution that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are Sacraments.

## 6

Luther time and again speaks of the necessity of the divine institution of a Sacrament, as also of the divine promise [Gospel] by which the Sacrament becomes efficacious, especially when he speaks of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

<sup>44</sup> St. Louis Ed., III:1693; Erl. 36, 227—229; Walch III, 2500—2503.

<sup>45</sup> St. Louis Ed., XIX:109; Erl. v. a. 5, 101—103; Walch XIX, 127—129.

In his "Sermon Concerning Holy Baptism," held in 1535, he writes: "Baptism we divide into three distinct parts, which are: water, Word, and God's command or institution. For this reason we must not regard the water alone, as [we do] other water, but we must regard also the Word, namely [Luther: *das heisst*], God's Word, in or with the water. And thirdly [we must regard] God's will and authority, or His command and institution. These are the things which belong to the complete essence and to the right definition of Baptism. . . . For in order that it [a rite] may be and be called a Sacrament, there is necessary, in the first place, an external, tangible sign or thing, by which God deals with us in a visible way, so that we may be sure of Him [of His dealing with us]. For He does not want to work in us without external means, merely through private inspiration or special heavenly revelations. But also the external work and sign alone is not valid and does not accomplish anything, [it is not effective] if His Word is not added to it, by which such a sign becomes efficacious and we understand what God works in us through such signs. But to these there must also come a divine command, by which we are made sure of His will and work in such signs and Word. These three things I, therefore, must show distinctively."<sup>46</sup>

Luther thus distinguishes in Holy Baptism first the sign, or the water; then the Word, or the Gospel, by which the rite becomes efficacious; and thirdly, the divine command, or institution. All three are necessary: the water as the sign; the command as the expressed will of God that Baptism should be a Sacrament; the promise which offers and conveys to us in Baptism the blessings of the Gospel.

In his Large Catechism Luther speaks of the divine promise in Baptism: "Now, they are so made as to separate faith, and that to which faith clings and is bound, though it be something external. Yea, it shall and must be something external that it may be apprehended by the senses and understood and thereby be brought into the heart, as indeed the entire Gospel is external, verbal preaching. In short, what God does and works in us He proposes to work through such external ordinances. Wherever, therefore, He speaks, yea, in whichever direction or by whatever means He speaks, thither faith must look, and to that it must hold. Now here we have the words:

<sup>46</sup> St. Louis Ed., X:2059; Erl. 19, 107—109; Walch X, 2517—2519.

*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.* To what else do they refer than to Baptism, that is, to the water, comprehended in God's ordinance? Hence it follows that whoever rejects Baptism rejects the Word of God, faith, and Christ, who directs us thither and binds us to Baptism."<sup>47</sup>

As in Baptism, so Luther recognizes also in the Lord's Supper the divine Word, in particular the Gospel, as the special instrument which renders it a true Sacrament or means of grace. This is attested by the quotations which have been offered above. But to these we may add a few more. In his monograph "Against the Heavenly Prophets" (1524—25) Luther writes: "For Christ has laid the strength and power of His suffering into the Sacrament in order that we might find and obtain it there according to the words: 'This is My body, which is given for you, for the remission of sins.'"<sup>48</sup> This means that the Lord's Supper is an efficacious means of grace on account of the Gospel promise which Christ has put into it.

In his writing "Concerning the Abuse of the Mass" (1522) Luther says: "For the sum of the whole Gospel is comprehended in it [the Sacrament], as Paul says: 'As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come' (1 Cor. 11:27)."<sup>49</sup>

And so, like Baptism, the Lord's Supper is to Luther a means of grace because of the Gospel, which is comprehended in it. By virtue of the Gospel promise in the Sacrament, we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation when we penitently and believingly receive it, trusting in the promise which Christ has placed into it.

Perhaps the clearest expression of Luther on this point is the one in the Small Catechism, where, in reply to the question: "What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?" he says: "This is shown us by these words: 'Given, and shed for you for the remission of sins'; namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us *through these words* [italics our own].

This is all the more important in view of Luther's reply to the question: "How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?" He says: "It is not the eating and drinking, in-

<sup>47</sup> *De Baptismo*, 30—31. *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 739.

<sup>48</sup> St. Louis Ed., XX:271; Erl. 23, 280—282; Walch XX, 351—360.

<sup>49</sup> St. Louis Ed., XIX:1125; Erl. 28, 86—88; Walch XIX, 1372—1375.

deed, that does them, but the words here written, 'Given, and shed for you for the remission of sins'; which words, besides the bodily eating and drinking, are as the chief thing in the Sacrament; and he that believes these words has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins."

And Luther, when he deals with the question: "Who, then, receives such Sacrament worthily?" replies: "Fasting and bodily preparation are indeed a fine outward training; but he is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words, 'Given and shed for you for the remission of sins.' But he that does not believe these words, or doubts, is unworthy and unprepared; for the words 'for you' require all hearts to believe."

In these words we have Luther's whole theology of the Word in a nutshell. To understand Luther correctly when he speaks of the means of grace, we must observe what he says with regard to Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It is the Word, the Gospel, that does everything, nothing else, nothing added by men: the Gospel proclaimed, the Gospel read, the Gospel symbolically represented, the Gospel applied in absolution, the Gospel in Baptism, the Gospel in the Lord's Supper, the Gospel in the "mutual conversation and consolation of brethren" (Smalcald Articles, IV; *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 491). The Gospel always and the Gospel only!

## 7

There is need why we, who bear Luther's name, should be reminded of this Scriptural Gospel theology of Luther. Ever since Luther restored the Gospel to an erring world, men have turned aside from it either to the Calvinist\* or the Romanist view. Both neglect the Gospel as the means of grace by which God works in us faith and sanctification and applies to us all the blessings of His atoning death.

They, of course, do it in different ways, since Calvinism and Romanism mean to be in opposition to each other. But ultimately they arrive at the same result: the rejection of the Gospel as the only means of grace. Reformed theology denies that the Holy Spirit needs an escort or wagon to come into

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[\* "Calvinism" is here used to denote Zwinglian emphasis on the immediate working of the Spirit, evident today particularly in Arminianism. — Ed.]

the human heart. Romanism has changed the Gospel into a new Law, basing all it teaches on human merit, or work-righteousness. By a strange but fortunate inconsistency both still preach the Gospel, the Calvinists more, the Romanists less. But the errors of both, if consistently applied, make faith and regeneration impossible.

Contrary to conceited human reason, the Holy Spirit has ordained means by which He works in the realm of grace, and He has repudiated work-righteousness as a means by which sinful man can merit salvation. The rejection of Luther's "Theology of the Word" ultimately means eternal hopelessness and damnation.

## 8

There is also an *usus practicus* of Luther's Word theology. As we see it in its full Scriptural glory, we shall in our whole ministry endeavor to preach the divine Word, and nothing but the Word; the Law for working knowledge of sin; the Gospel, for showing penitent sinners how to obtain remission of sin. We shall become true teachers of the divine Word only as we fully understand Luther's Scriptural theology of the Word.

And as we do so, we shall more fully appreciate Luther's two great teachings: the *sola Scriptura* and the *sola gratia*; the former as the source and norm of the Word of God which we proclaim; the latter as the aim or goal of our whole preaching, namely, that contrite sinners may be saved through faith in Christ.

Luther's Word theology has ever been the object of contention in theological debate. Here men meet as they believe in the Word; here their ways part as the Gospel is foolishness and a stumbling block to them.

But Luther's Word theology has been the greatest blessing that has come to Christendom ever since the days of the blessed Apostles. It assigns to the Law its proper place and to the Gospel its proper place. In its light we understand fully the meaning and function of the Gospel in its proclamation, in its presentation to men in writing, in absolution, in Baptism, in Holy Communion, in symbols, in private fraternal application. Only Luther's Word theology makes understanding, enlightened Christians assured of their salvation; nothing else can do this.

St. Louis, Mo.



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## Homiletics

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### A Series of Sermon Studies for the Church Year

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#### TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

1 PET. 3:15-18

*The Text and the Day.* — In the Introit the Christian asks God to deliver him from those who would destroy his soul. In the Gradual the Christian sings the praises of God. These thoughts correspond to the thoughts of the text.

*Notes on Meaning.* — V. 15. "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." These words speak of the Christian's own personal relation to God. "Sanctify" is the same word used in the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer. God's name should be kept holy. Reverence and adoration are due to God, almighty and gracious, the Father in heaven. However, not mere lip service, but "in your hearts." — The Christian should make confession of his faith, especially when asked concerning his hope, his Christian religion. In order to do so, the Christian must be well indoctrinated. — Since the Christian still has the sinful flesh, he needs to be warned not to let bitterness, haughtiness, anger, etc., frustrate his good confession when others do not readily accept it. Therefore the Christian is admonished to make his confession with meekness, humility, kindness, and in the fear of God.

V. 16. The Christian should in all things have and preserve "a good conscience," making sure that his life is in accordance with the will of God and has the right motivation, not selfish desires or self-glory, but the love of God and the welfare of the neighbor. Then the Christian's "good confession in Christ" will exert a good influence upon the ungodly, so that the false accusers will be put to shame, Rom. 12:20-21.

V. 17. Suffering for the cause of Christ is part of the Christian's life in this world, and it is not without the knowledge and will of God. When the Christian asserts himself, he must expect opposition, ridicule, even persecution, 1 Pet. 1:6-7; Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 3:12; John 15:18-19; John 16:1-4; but also 1 Cor. 10:13; Rom. 8:28, 38-39.

V. 18. From Christ's victory over sin, death, and hell the Christian receives strength to resist sin, for Christ redeemed him not only from the guilt and punishment of sin, but also from its dominion. From Christ's example as a patient Sufferer ("the Just for the unjust") the Christian receives direction and encouragement. Christ "hath once suffered for sins"; after that no more. The suffering of the Christian also lasts only "for a season," 1 Pet. 1:6. After that, eternal glory. Rom. 8:17-18. — Christ had no sin of His own, but suffered "as the Just for the unjust." Christ's life was a life of welldoing, and yet He was despised and rejected. "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you," John 15:20. The Apostles "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name," Acts 5:41. — Christ, the innocent One, suffered for the guilty, that "He might bring us to God." When the ungodly see the Christian suffer patiently for welldoing, they may by the grace of God have their conscience aroused, be persuaded to inquire what makes the Christian that way and also to hear and accept the Gospel for their own salvation to the glory of God," Matt. 5:16.

*Preaching Emphases.* — The preacher should read the entire epistle. It was written to strangers, Christians, scattered through Pontus, etc., chap. 1:1. Those Christians had to endure much opposition on the part of their heathen countrymen. Peter therefore first (vv. 1-12) reminds them of their glorious and eternal inheritance and then admonishes them to remain steadfast, to be "as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance."

*Preaching Pitfalls.* — The words: "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the spirit," may not be readily understood, since even commentators differ in their interpretation. Both datives must be taken in the same sense, as datives of sphere and not of instrument. In the sphere of His flesh, Christ was put to death; in the sphere of His spirit (not the Holy Ghost) He was quickened, entered into the glorious resurrection of life. Even so the Christian, after suffering here on earth, enters into eternal glory, Rom. 8:18, 28, 36-37.

*Problem and Goal.* — The Christian's "good conversation in Christ" over against the opposition on the part of an ungodly world should be stressed. "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together," Rom. 8:17-18.

*Outline:*ENCOURAGEMENTS GIVEN TO CHRISTIANS TO LIVE  
A GODLY LIFE IN AN UNGODLY WORLD

- I. Christians should well look to their own personal Christianity, vv. 15-16.
- II. Christians should be well indoctrinated so that they can give a good account of their faith, v. 15.
- III. By daily living a godly life, Christians should give evidence of their Christianity, vv. 16-18. J. H. C. FRITZ

## THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

PHIL. 2:12-16

*The Text and the Day.* — Both the Epistle and the Gospel for this Sunday suggest a sermon about the purpose of God's Law and the Christian's obedience to it. The same thought is reflected in the Introit, the Collect, and the Gradual. The text furnishes an opportunity to preach about the Christian's Obedience to God's will.

*Notes on Meaning.* — St. Paul praises the Christians at Philippi for their past obedience, which is good psychology for a preacher and exhorter. On the basis of past performance the Apostle expects future compliance. It is well to give Christians credit for their good deeds and piety. Jesus did that when he spoke of Nathanael. There is no danger of encouraging work-righteousness when true piety and good works are designated as the outflow of faith. Have no fear to praise a Christian, even when he is in a coffin, but praise his faith first. Verse 12 urges a tremendous *earnestness* in seeking one's salvation. The "fear and trembling" is not a quavering distrust of God's willingness to save us; God surely wants to save us, and He does everything for us to carry out that intention, v. 13. See also Ezek. 33:11; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 Tim. 2:4. But the Christian's earnest desire for salvation must evidence itself in his obedience to God's will. And this obedience must be gladly given; the Philippians gave it when the Apostle was there to exhort them, and they gave it when he was gone, v. 12. Obedience should be given without murmuring and disputing, v. 14. It needs urging and admonishing, but not coercion and threatening. The Christian is a light in the wicked

world by his obedience to God's will; he helps to make the world a better place to live in, v. 15. He is an example to others for their conduct. He is a good citizen. His home life is exemplary. He is esteemed by good people. He wins souls for God's kingdom by his Christian life, v. 16 a. People will listen to the Word on account of the piety of Christians. And when Christians obey God's will, they are a source of joy to those who trained and taught them, their parents, pastors, teachers, and others (v. 16), both in this life and especially in the life to come.

*Preaching Pitfalls.* — Do not hunt a contradiction between verses 12 b and 13 and try to reconcile them. Paul would not be so foolish as to put contradictions so close together. He is simply saying that we must be *earnest* in our desire for salvation (12 b) and depend upon God for carrying it out. (Earnest in our desire to put our salvation to work. — Ed.)

*Preaching Emphases.* — The sermon should clearly stress sanctification as the necessary result of faith in Christ. The sermon must be linked with the recitation of Christ's atonement, vv. 5-11. The sermon should show the value and blessing of obedience to God.

*Problem and Goal.* — The preacher should feel in his heart a crusader's enthusiasm to achieve a greater respect for God's will among his members when he preaches this sermon. He should feel appalled by his own lethargy in making God's will the first rule in his life for his thoughts, words, and deeds. He should feel alarmed at the evidence of weakness in obeying God's will that he sees in his congregation. He should realize that unless he and his flock endeavor to do God's will, he and his flock will go to hell. And he should have the unrelenting purpose to instruct and lead and guide his congregation in the direction of piety and holiness. That burning purpose will make him earnest and serious, yet loving and evangelical.

*Outline:*

THE CHRISTIAN'S OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WILL

1. It is motivated by faith in Jesus, vv. 5-10; "wherefore . . ."
2. It is willingly and gladly given, vv. 12 b, 14. It needs urging and admonition but no coercion and threatening.

3. It makes Christians useful members of society, examples for others, and winners of souls, vv. 15-16 a.
4. It creates joy in the hearts of parents, pastors, teachers, and others who see the fruit of their labors, v. 16. See Heb. 13:17. Sometimes parents, pastors, and teachers feel that their efforts are fruitless. But they learn, too, that in many cases their admonitions have good results. See Is. 55:10-11. They rejoice then, and their rejoicing will be complete when the obedient Christian, saved by his faith, reaches heaven "in the day of Christ."

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FREDERIC NIEDNER

### FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

ROM. 7:18-25

*The Text and the Day.* — The text is the chief parallel to the Epistle for the day, Gal. 5:16-24. The Collect petitions for power to overcome the frailty of the flesh and sin.

*Notes on Meaning.* — The Apostle discusses two principles, or powers, at work in him, as a regenerate man, side by side and simultaneously: the flesh and the spirit; the law in his members and the law of the inward man; the law of sin and the law of his mind. The point at which the former effects its chief attack is in the domain of the will. The regenerate self can indeed have good desires (v. 18, "to will is present with me"), but frequently fails to achieve actual performance; the regenerate self can desire not to do the evil (v. 19), but fails to prevent the deed. Hence the Apostle distinguishes between two "I's," or personalities: the flesh (v. 18) and a self of which he speaks as though it were more properly he, the self contrasted to the law of sin, v. 20. The principle of sin is not static, but active, seeking to extend its sphere over the entire domain of the self, v. 23; it is, in effect, a body of death (v. 24) and causes the Apostle to view himself as "wretched" and to cry out for deliverance. He sees that deliverance not simply in escape from the body of the flesh, but in Jesus Christ, v. 24. The process has been described in detail in chap. 6, especially v. 6: through the redemption of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Spirit in Word and Baptism, a life is established which is dead to sin, and hence the body of sin loses its capacity for evil; it, too, dies.

*Preaching Pitfalls.* — This is not a text on justification, but sanctification; not on the process of forgiveness and faith, but on the process of growing in grace in order to overcome the dominion and influence of sin. — “Law” is not used of Mosaic or Natural Law or of the demands of God or men to obey certain commandments, but in the sense of “principle,” or “motive power.”

*Preaching Emphases.* — “Through Christ Jesus, our Lord” is in this text (v. 25) only a reminiscence of the abundant material of chapters 3, 5, and 6. Hence it needs careful delineation: Jesus Christ is central in the scheme not merely of justification, but of sanctification and conquest of the flesh.

*Problem and Goal.* — The preacher addresses people, in using this text, who have already come to faith, but who find the problem of sin still acute — who are, in fact, because of their faith, unusually aware of the problem of their continuing sin. In this sermon he aims not merely to bring his people to a fuller sense of forgiveness of sin, but to put them into the process of overcoming sin and reducing its influence more and more. The goals are also outlined Gal. 5 and 1 John 1—2.

*Outline:*

THE CHRISTIAN'S CONQUEST OF HIS DUAL PERSONALITY

- I. The Christian man is two people.
  - A. He was under the bondage of sin.
  - B. Through Jesus Christ He has been redeemed from sin.
  - C. Through the power of the Spirit a new life has begun its work.
    1. New impulses for the will have been put to work.
    2. Yet these impulses meet with obstacles, and sin still plagues the Christian.
- II. Through Christ the Christian man may conquer the flesh.
  - A. This side of the grave the plague continues.
  - B. Yet the Christian has the power for growth and victory.



1. Christ continues to be Guarantee for forgiveness and power.
2. The Christian therefore continues the battle against sin within himself, keeping under the body and enhancing the life of the Spirit.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

## FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

2 Cor. 9:6-11

*The Text of the Day.* — This Sunday is one of the many of the Trinity season, the non-festival portion of the church year, in which the great truths of the festival portion of the church year are applied to workaday Christianity. The old Standard Epistle and Gospel lessons for this Sunday speak clearly and unmistakably of faith in action. Whereas the Epistle, in the last portion at least, speaks primarily of the generous use of one's possessions for the support of Christ's kingdom, the Gospel invites and urges us to let the Kingdom of God be our first and foremost concern. Cp. Gal. 5:25—6:10; Matt. 6:24-34. The text before us therefore fits well into this cycle of the church year. It is, as it were, an exposition of both the Epistle and the Gospel of the old church pericopes.

*Notes on Meaning.* — An offering to alleviate the suffering of fellow Christians in Judea was to be gathered. The Christians at Corinth had resolved to participate in this collection. Cp. 8:10-11 and 9:1-5. This offering was about to be gathered. In the text the Apostle urges the Corinthian Christians to liberality in giving. He cites an example from agriculture. One who sows sparingly, perhaps a peck of wheat, where a bushel and more is required, cannot hope to reap bountifully, v. 6. The motive behind such liberality is ungrudging gratitude to God for His amazing love and grace, v. 7. This requires a proper conditioning of the heart (v. 7), after which the giving will not be mechanical, or merely done to save face ("of necessity"), but it will be cheerful and willing, v. 7. And such giving is not in vain, for it has the promise of God's abundant blessing, v. 8. In the following verses (9-10), with a quotation from the Old Testament, the Apostle wishes his Corinthian Christians God's bountiful blessing upon their

liberality. And having by their liberality helped to alleviate the suffering of fellow Christians elsewhere, the Corinthian Christians will be the cause of thanksgiving to God on the part of many, v. 11.

*Preaching Emphases.* — The text is suited to impress on our Christians that the right spirit must be behind their giving and to urge them to greater liberality in their support of the far-flung activities of their dear Church. The heart of the text is this sentence: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give," v. 7 a. Cp. also 2 Cor. 8: 5; Prov. 23: 26. Such a heart has utter confidence in God's goodness and trusts implicitly in God's promises, v. 8. In such a heart there is joy over the privilege of rendering service to God, an assurance of basking in the love of God, v. 7 b. And by giving which comes from the heart "thanksgiving to God" is caused, v. 11.

*Problem and Goal.* — The 15th Sunday after Trinity suggests a 39-week review of stewardship performances during three fourths of the year, since this Sunday is at the very end of 39 weeks of the year. Three quarters of a year of grace and blessing have been added to eternity. Perhaps of much of the giving during that time it could be said: "He gives nothing but worthless gold who gives from a sense of duty." Our problem therefore is to get our listeners to put their heart into their giving. Again and again in our stewardship sermons we must point to God's goodness and grace and bountifulness. Our hearers must be taught to give from the heart, to be enriched in everything to all bountifulness. Bountifulness suggests that we at least investigate and, if possible, strive to reach the amount which our Government permits us to deduct from our gross income for this very purpose. This happens to be 15 per cent. Much of the giving of the past has been done "sparingly," only about 1 per cent last year. And because many give too sparingly, the Church and her work are seriously hampered, and perennial drives and appeals become necessary to carry on the most necessary work, to say nothing of expansion. Hence our goal is to awaken our Christians to greater liberality. Let us tell them: "Who gives himself with his alms feeds three" (cp. "The Vision of Sir Launfal," by James Russell Lowell), and "God loveth a cheerful giver."

*Outline:***THE HEART OF GIVING IS THE GIVING OF THE HEART**

- I. Without the heart in it our giving will be bare and worthless.
  - A. Sparingly, v. 6 a. Grudgingly, of necessity, v. 7.
  - B. Then blind leaders of the blind, Luke 6:39.
  - C. Thereby manifesting a weak, anemic Christianity.
- II. With the heart in it our giving will be truly sacrificial and worshipful.
  - A. Consciousness of God's love, v. 7 c.
  - B. Trust in God's grace and bountifulness, vv. 8-10.
  - C. Incite and provoke others to give thanks to God, v. 11.

Conclusion: Luke 6:38.

WALTER H. BOUMAN



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## Miscellanea

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### **Lutheran Graduate Schools of Theology**

#### **Why Graduate Schools of Theology?**

1. General progress in education in our country today.

The Church must keep pace and provide the men with special training where needed.

A generation ago the pastor was still the best and frequently the only educated man in his community. Even as late as 1910 there were few high school students to be found in the average parish of the Lutheran Church, and college graduates were exceedingly rare.

In 1890 there were only 200,000 students in all high schools of the U. S. At present this number has exceeded the 7 million mark, and our boys and girls are among them. As late as 1910 there were fewer students in the high schools than there are now students in American colleges and universities. Members with one or more college degrees are now to be found in nearly every parish of our Church. In 1939 the enrollment in American colleges was 1,208,000. Now it has exceeded the 2 million mark.

This means that we must raise the general level of theological training to keep pace with the rise in general education in our country today. The number of parishes is increasing where more than a general theological training of the pastor is necessary. The Church must supply these men in its own graduate schools.

2. Education on the graduate level has made tremendous strides forward in the last generation, and the Church cannot afford to lag behind in theological scholarship.

There are 324 colleges and universities in the United States offering graduate work. In the five years from 1940 to 1945 these graduate schools conferred a total of 139,605 Master's degrees and 14,722 Doctor's degrees. In 1900 the total enrollment in our American colleges was 114,372. It must be noted that the five years referred to were war years, when enrollment in graduate schools was not at a normal level. During the next five years this number will increase very substantially.

Compared with these figures, there is a total of five Lutheran theological seminaries in the United States offering graduate work; and in the five years from 1942 to 1947 these five seminaries conferred a total of 127 Master's degrees and 4 Doctorates in Theology. Of these, 13 Master's degrees and one doctorate were conferred by Concordia Seminary.

There are only a very limited number of graduate schools of theology in the other Protestant churches which could be compared with secular graduate schools of our day. Theological scholarship in America has not kept pace with secular scholarship. Formerly, theology was the queen among the faculties of the great univer-

sities. Today she must struggle to maintain a few humble graduate schools. Secularism has been victorious on this front also. The spiritual health of the future Church demands that the men who train the pastors of tomorrow at our theological seminaries, and even in our preparatory schools, receive their training in orthodox Lutheran theological graduate schools. The Church will suffer irreparable harm if the fountainhead where pastors are trained becomes polluted.

We ought to learn a lesson from the Lutheran churches in Europe and from the Protestant denominations in America. When the teachers of the future pastors have become influenced by secularism, unbelief, and modernism, it will not be long before the pastors of the Church will transmit this down to their parishes.

3. Lutheran pastors and graduates of theological schools are attending in ever-increasing number non-Lutheran seminaries, and, surely, the Church cannot remain indifferent to that situation indefinitely. No student can be exposed to the influence of an able teacher and not be affected by his theology. If the Lutheran Church does not meet this situation now, the consequences for the Church in the future will be serious. Lutheran theology is bound to be influenced by Calvinism or Modernism. It is imperative that the Church provide and control the entire theological training of its future pastors and professors. The excuse that our duty is to train pastors and missionaries for the Church is no longer valid. We must do both—train pastors and missionaries and also Lutheran scholars.

The founding fathers of our Church provided a theological training far in advance of general secular scholarship of those days in America. Today we are far behind, and the Church is not doing for our age what the fathers did a hundred years ago for their age and generation.

4. There is a marked tendency today for pastors and theological students to attend graduate schools of our secular universities and earn their Master's and Doctor's degrees. This urge has become very pronounced in our day. But other professional men, like doctors and lawyers, do not increase their general education to improve their professional proficiency; they continue their professional training in their respective professional schools and clinics. The Master's and Doctor's degrees as conferred by our universities certainly have their value, but at best they can only be supplementary to the real professional training. They do not necessarily enhance the pastoral proficiency or the theology of the theological professor; but as long as there is no theological graduate school on the level of secular graduate schools to satisfy their thirst for knowledge, our pastors and theological students will continue to attend these secular institutions.

5. The German Lutheran universities in Europe, to which the Protestant world in the past looked for leadership and upon whom they depended for research and scholarship, either have been de-

stroyed or are so crippled in finance and personnel that, humanly speaking, it will require decades or more for them to recover, if they ever can. In the meantime Lutheran scholarship will suffer an irreparable setback if American Lutheranism will not take over this responsibility and take up the torch of Lutheran scholarship where our European brethren were forced to drop it, or at least to lower it. We dare not evade this responsibility. In God's own providence the disturbed conditions of the world today have helped to bring our Synod and Concordia Seminary to the attention of Lutheranism in the world. The Lutheran Hour and other factors have contributed also to make our Seminary known here in America. The time is therefore most propitious for us to take the initiative in bringing our influence to bear on Lutheran and Protestant theology. We ought to become a city on the hill and not hide our light under a bushel. We at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, have already begun to attract pastors and students from other denominations. In the last two years we have had graduates from Princeton, Louisville, Dallas, Eden, and other seminaries, but we ought to attract still more. These young men will influence thousands of people in their parishes, as they go out into their respective ministries. The influence for good that Concordia Seminary could exert through its graduate school is beyond calculation.

6. Reformed theology is experiencing a tremendous upsurge in the world today, and Reformed scholars are beginning to assume the leadership in Protestant theology. To that must be added the very growing and expanding influence of the Catholic Church and Catholic scholarship. But, surely, the Lutheran Church cannot sit idly by and surrender to Calvinism or Catholicism. To counteract these influences, the Church must use every means at its disposal. One field which we have seriously neglected in the past is that of up-to-date scholarship; hence a Lutheran graduate school is no longer a luxury, but has become a necessity in our theological education.

7. There is a great need for orthodox Lutheran theological literature. Most of the great German Lutheran classics grew out of classroom activities. But our classes for the general preparation are too large and the field too wide to provide sufficient opportunity to produce thorough, scholarly works in theology. For that more leisure, smaller classes, and more intensive study are required. The graduate school will provide that setting.

8. What about a central graduate school operated jointly by all Lutheran bodies in America?

It is well known that this idea is receiving much attention in Lutheran circles in America today. And there are those in our own body who would either support that idea or establish a separate theological graduate school at some centrally located place and connect it with some great university—as, for example, the University of Chicago.



Theoretically, many arguments can be advanced in favor of such a project. Practically, it seems to offer insurmountable difficulties.

a. So long as doctrinal unity has not been established, such a venture would not and could not receive the support of our Church or the Synodical Conference.

b. The financial support, the theological and ecclesiastical control, the appointment of instructors, would cause very serious difficulties. Experience in America teaches that where the Church loses direct control of the theological schools, these schools become instruments of destruction of the very Church that founded them.

c. The cost would be prohibitive.

To establish a new graduate school would require an expenditure of many millions of dollars. The establishment of an adequate library alone would be one of the most serious difficulties. It would be difficult to convince our laity, who in the last analysis must furnish the money for such a venture, that this would be good stewardship.

d. In America graduate schools have flourished best in connection with undergraduate departments.

The great graduate schools in our country today are all the upper division built on the undergraduate division of our universities. In fact, the graduate schools have made the universities famous. The same would apply to our situation. A strong graduate school would have an uplifting effect on the entire seminary. The same library and the same faculty can serve in both graduate and undergraduate departments, and there is no reason why theological schools should be different in that respect from our secular universities.

#### 9. What is necessary to develop our Graduate School.

It can be said that we have an excellent start. Our enrollment has grown by leaps and bounds. We have not only succeeded in attracting very great numbers of the pastors in the vicinity of St. Louis, some driving as far as 150 miles, but we are attracting our own graduates and, as already indicated, attracting graduates and pastors of other denominations, who are happy to find a school in which they can pursue advanced studies in theology from a positive, Biblical point of view. Many of them have expressed their satisfaction and joy to have the opportunity to study with us. But though we have made progress, our Graduate School is still in its infancy. To develop it, several things ought to be done:

a. The faculty of Concordia Seminary must be increased to the extent that we can devote more of our faculty time to real graduate school work. There has been a considerable increase in our faculty, which has improved the situation at the Seminary and also at our Graduate School, but we are still somewhat cramped because of the shortage of manpower.

b. Faculty Training. If the Graduate School is to measure up to the standards of the great graduate schools, we must make it possible for our professors to prepare themselves for this work. That means leave-of-absence for further study; and that must not be a matter of mere pious resolutions, but must be put into practice now.

c. We must spend more money for the improvement of our library. Our library has made wonderful progress in the last five or ten years, but there are still great gaps, and the Church must be prepared to fill these gaps and spend substantial sums for the improvement of our library. There were decades when our Seminary library was neglected. We must now atone for this neglect.

d. There is a growing need for more classroom and seminar rooms.

e. We are in need of some attractive scholarships, which would make it possible for our most promising young men to continue their studies for the doctorate. We ought to cultivate a fraternal fellowship with our daughter churches in South America and Australia and other parts of the world. The best way, to my mind, to do that is to establish a few scholarships by which a continuous and unbroken chain of young men from these countries would get their training at Concordia Seminary. They would take back with them a spirit of fellowship and an affection for our Church, so that the bonds between them and us would be made more secure. We should also have a scholarship for our seminary at Greensboro; and, finally, we ought to consider a worth-while teaching fellowship for our candidates for the doctorate. This would be a great inducement for some of our best young men to continue their studies with us.

We also require a moderate sum in the budget for extension work. So far, extension work has usually paid for itself or has been supported by the District in which it was conducted, but that is too uncertain. To begin extension work is always a financial risk, and we should have funds available to cover any shortage that may occur.

10. The History and Program of Concordia Graduate School. The Graduate School of Concordia Seminary was established by an act of Synod in 1920. The first graduate students were enrolled in 1922. Owing to the peculiar conditions of the thirties (the nationwide economic depression, teaching staff undermanned, large undergraduate classes) the Graduate School was discontinued from 1931 to 1938. In that year graduate work was resumed once more, and the activities of the school were expanded to include pastors' institutes and extension work in various areas of the Church.

We now have a faculty of 22 professors and three instructors and are, therefore, better able to carry on the work. Men are now called with the view toward qualifying also to teach in the Grad-

uate School. The Graduate School has become an integral part of the Seminary program.

**Admission.** To be admitted to the Graduate School, the applicant must hold the degrees of Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Divinity, or their equivalent, and must have a quality point of 2 or better for previous work done in theology.

We offer work towards the S.T.M., and, since 1944, also towards the Th.D. degree. Our requirements for the S.T.M. degree are one year of residence above the B.D.; and for the Th.D., two years of residence above the B.D. degree. Students must be able to work in English, German, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and for the doctorate in a third modern language. The S.T.M. degree is a prerequisite for the Th.D.

Our enrollment during the last semester was

|                    |       |    |
|--------------------|-------|----|
| Full-time students | ..... | 29 |
| Part-time students | ..... | 65 |
|                    |       | —  |
|                    |       | 94 |

These figures do not include students enrolled in our Summer Extension Courses.

At present we have 32 candidates for the S.T.M. degree and one for the Doctorate.

A. M. REHWINKEL

### Concerning the Status of the Lutheran Churches in the World

DEAR BRETHREN IN THE MINISTRY:

The following lines and letters which, God willing, are to follow this one, are addressed to Lutheran pastors in totally different churches and nations, in Germany and in the remaining Europe, in North and South America, in Africa and Australia. They are addressed to fellow-ministers who together with the undersigned know themselves bound by their ordination vow to the Holy Scriptures as the *norma normans* of all the doctrines of the Church and to the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as the true interpretation of the Scriptures. They are addressed to brethren whose hearts bleed, whenever they see the condition in which the Lutheran Church of our day and of our world finds itself. We know full well: Not only we as theologians see and labor under these distressing conditions. Numberless members of our congregations share our experience and sense the reason for the Church's need. But we, as the incumbents of the *ministerium ecclesiasticum* defined by Article V of the *Augustana*, have this duty toward the Christian congregation, to gain a clear understanding of the *status of the Lutheran Church in the world*, of the cause and ultimate reason for her need, and to do our utmost, as far as mortals can do anything in this matter, to overcome this need.

## 1.

At the first glance we may gain the impression as if the status of the Lutheran Church were a more splendid one than ever before in her history. We can point to the "Lutheran World Federation," which represents an organized merger of the churches of the *Invariata* as has never before been realized in the history of our Church, not even in the most favorable times of the old "Lutheran World Council." This World Federation and its constituent churches have evolved efficient organizations, which are without comparison in the history of our Church. We but have to remind ourselves of the large relief-organizations of American fellow-believers, who came to the aid of the needy churches of Europe; or of the colossal work which is being conducted from Geneva by Dr. S. C. Michelfelder and Dr. Stewart Herman. One can also point to clear signs of a considerable outward progress in the Lutheran Churches of other lands, as, for instance, the union movement of the Lutheran Churches of America. This movement at least had this result that the relationship of the Lutherans, who had stood in sharp opposition to each other, has become an entirely different and better one. This is perhaps the deepest impression of the fully altered church conditions of Lutheranism in the United States gained by the undersigned when he for the first time after 22 years was permitted to visit the Lutheran Churches of the New World at the exceedingly friendly invitation of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Even in Germany Lutheranism occasionally shows signs of life, although it has been robbed of its influence on the world and although its most recent history is one large chain of ecclesiastical political defeats. That a number of professors as members of a non-Lutheran faculty like that at Heidelberg, which legally can never become Lutheran, personally subscribe to the *Augustana Invariata* and teach accordingly, even more so than is done on old faculties nominally still Lutheran—who would not find in this a cause for rejoicing. And also in the Ecumenical Movement of our day, in the recently established Council of Churches, the Lutheran Churches are well represented and are the recipients of many a compliment. At first glance everything seems to be in the best of order, the Lutheran Church even in the ascendancy. What do we mean when we, in view of these circumstances, speak of a dire need of our Church? That there should be a need, even an urgent need of the Lutheran Church, is that not perhaps but the view of a few malcontents and pessimists, whom no one has to take seriously?

## 2.

The need of the Lutheran Church becomes apparent in that she is denied the right to exist as a church and that she has put up with it more or less. It is the Reformed Church, or to be more exact, the Reformed Churches of various shades of confession, who are willing to tolerate Lutheranism as an imperfect semi-

Catholic form of Evangelical Christianity, even as they also put up with Anglicanism. This is only done under the condition that the Lutheran Church considers herself as one section and one form of the one Evangelical Church and therefore remains with the Reformed Church in the *communio in sacris*. For according to the opinion of the Swiss Reformers, as it especially becomes apparent in the far-reaching church politics of Calvin, the Evangelical Church is the church of the *sola scriptura*, different types of interpretation of the Scriptures having led to different formations of this one Evangelical Church, which do not exclude but supplement each other. In this sense all great Reformed theologians have understood the coexistence of Lutheran and Reformed Churches. Schleiermacher and Karl Barth, both living in lands of the German tongue, — despite the differences otherwise existing between them — have said it with almost the same words, namely that the difference in doctrine between Lutherans and Reformed is one of the theological school, but not one of the Church. Both have brought their theological convictions to bear on church politics: Schleiermacher as one of the founding fathers and as the actual church father of the Prussian Union; Barth as the founder and sponsor of that "Confessional Union" which in 1934 was formed at Barmen in opposition to the confessional Lutherans, in that a mixed Synod composed of Lutherans, Reformed, and United theologians framed a doctrinal declaration and thereby claimed the right to judge between pure and false doctrine in the Evangelical Church. If even in Germany the significance of this step was not understood — which in 1948 logically led to the founding of the Evangelical Church in Germany, including Lutheran, Reformed, and United Churches, as the legal and actual successor of the German Evangelical Church of 1933 — how was one to understand this step in foreign countries, where one was not able to see anything else in regard to Barmen than the courageous protest against the encroachments of the State on the legal sphere of the Church and where one knew nothing or little of the conflict which confessional Lutheranism carried on in favor of a confessional solution of the church problem? We repeat, no one knew anything or little of the conflict because of the wholly onesided information transmitted by the International Press, which again was under the control of the sponsors of this new union. In the Nordic lands, with a few laudable exceptions, Calvinistic church-politics were not known, because Calvinism never had been in the land. In America Lutheran and Reformed churches exist side by side as separate churches and apart from a few territories like Pennsylvania the question of a union between Lutherans and Reformed has nowhere really ever arisen. Added to this the Lutherans in the other parts of the world, whose forefathers at one time emigrated because of the secularization and the unionism of their home churches, and founded Lutheran confessional churches in their new homelands, lost, by failing to retain their German



language, a knowledge of the above-mentioned events of German church history. Therefore we are face to face with the fact that world-Lutheranism, occupied with the task of setting up an imposing outward structure, does not at all become aware of having lost the ground under its feet in that the Christian world contested its right to exist as an independent church. In the Germany of the 19th century the claim of an independent church-existence was made in such a manner that the Lutherans demanded a church government in accord with the Lutheran Confessions, claiming that "the church government as an important part of the Church must also, as far as orthodox doctrine and administration of the Sacraments are concerned, be in harmony with the church which it is to govern. Therefore it is not permissible to unite, by means of a common church government, churches which are not in agreement with one another as to doctrine and the administration of the Sacraments." With these sentences Theodor Kliefoth at the General Evangelical Lutheran Conference, the first ecumenical organization of Lutheranism in 1868, opposed the theological statement of the Prussian unionists that the Lutheran Confessions do not demand a confessional church government, since the unity of the Church consists in the *consentire de doctrina evangelii et de administratione sacramentorum* and not in a fixed constitution. That this *consentire* can also obtain under a mixed church government was the opinion of the sponsors of the union at that time and is their opinion today. But if the conflict in the German Church since 1933 had one definite result, it was the knowledge that a church cannot adhere to its confession for any length of time as long as only the pastors and the congregations are bound to the confession, but not also the church government. Therefore the newly formed EKD actually does regard its church government as bound not only to the Holy Scriptures, but also to the Confessions of the Ancient Church and to "the decisions of the first Confessional Church passed at Barmen." In other words, practically speaking, the church government is bound to the doctrinal decisions of the "Theological Declaration" of Barmen, which have been taken over by many Land churches into the ordination formulas and vows of the church elders. Now as regards the Confessions of the Lutheran Reformation, they are still being recognized in the Lutheran territories of the EKD. But since the Reformed and United Confessions in the respective constituent churches within the EKD are regarded as having equal rights, the Lutheran Confessions are actually being robbed of that binding dogmatical force whereby the unity of the Church is safeguarded. With it Lutheranism ceases to be a church. From the Reformed viewpoint it is understood to be a movement of the Evangelical Church, a theological school. Indeed, it regards itself as just that since the factual recognition of Barmen, and only in this sense some Lutheran Land churches have united as the "United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany" to represent



the union of Lutheranism in the EKD. Concerning this EKD its founders, also the Lutheran bishops of Germany, say, only with somewhat different words, exactly what Frederick William III declared in regard to the Prussian Union as introduced by him: "It does not purpose and signify a relinquishing of the hitherto existing confession. Also the authority which the two Evangelical creeds had till now has not thereby been annulled. By joining it one merely expresses that spirit of moderation and charitableness which no longer regards the differences between the two creeds in point of doctrine as a reason to deny each other outward church-fellowship." Consequently unionism in Germany actually has gained a victory over confessionalism. Likewise the Reformed conception of the Evangelical Church and of the church confessions has gained a victory over the Lutheran. The conception of the Confession of the Church, as we find it unequivocally expressed in Luther's Large Confession of 1528, in his Smalcald Articles, and in the Formula of Concord, and as it is also presupposed in the *Augustana*, is now quite impossible. What Karl Barth calls the "pious and free relativism" of the Reformed Confession has now taken the place of that definiteness with which the Lutheran Confession regards its doctrinal content as the doctrinal content of the Holy Scriptures, from which one "cannot depart or give way in anything" and with which Luther and the confessors of the Formula of Concord wanted "to appear with intrepid hearts before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ, and give an account of it." The *quia* of the confessional oath has given way to the non-obligatory *quatenus*. From this attempt at making the Confessions something relative it is only a short step to its invalidation, a step which has been taken already in large parts of Reformed Christendom. But this development means practically nothing less than that in the Lutheranism of the German churches the heretofore valid and legally accepted Formula of Concord has been invalidated. For no theologian will earnestly maintain that the spirit of moderation and charitableness, which once gained command in Prussia and now in all of Germany, can be brought into accord with the condemnations which the Formula of Concord has voiced against Calvinism and Crypto-Calvinism, although with the express reservation that it does not intend to deprive erring Reformed churches of the character of a church of Christ.

Now the shocking part of this development is that it has not only taken place in Germany. It was not a mere chance occurrence that neither from Nordic Lutheranism nor from the Lutheran Churches of America including the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod a loud warning has been voiced in regard to this wrong undertaking. Also no definite repudiation of the "Evangelical Church of Germany" and of the "United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany," which is very closely joined up with the former, has been voiced. One can explain this in part because of the extraordinary difficulty to understand the development in

Germany and to correctly evaluate its significance. But this difficulty is not the only explanation. The deepest reason is rather to be sought in the fact that a similar development, although in a different manner, has taken place also in these churches. In the Nordic churches it is a result of the Reformed influences in the Ecumenical Movement. Here one understands Lutheranism as one of the great historical growths of Protestantism, which can be blended with other forms into a higher unity without losing its own peculiar rights and manner of existence. Especially in the Church of Sweden it has been forgotten that there is also an ecumenical movement which, of course, seeks a new relationship of the creeds, but which also knows that the great creeds do not only supplement but also exclude one another. The strong dogmatical character of the Confessions and with it the import of the condemnations which exclude church union have been forgotten. Apparently both in Scandinavia and in Germany this is the result of an influence of liberalism within the Church. This liberalism, which, it is true, is publicly being declared dead, has in reality permeated all theology and thereby has conquered the Church in a seemingly harmless and yet extremely dangerous manner. And something quite similar has taken place in America. There, strange enough, liberalism calls itself neo-orthodoxy and as such it has gained access to Lutheran faculties which formerly were inaccessible to all liberal influences. Step by step one can trace the weakening of the dogmatical heritage in the inability of the old orthodoxy to win the youth and to render an explanation of the present-day problems. This change has become evident in the fate of the Galesburg Rule of 1875 which conforms to the above-cited principle of the German Lutherans of 1868: "Lutheran pulpits are for Lutheran ministers only; Lutheran altars are for Lutheran communicants only." While already the matter of fact way with which the abolition of this principle was accepted in America, no conclusions being drawn from it in regard to church-unity, predicted a weakening of the approved rule on which in the United States the valid existence of a real Lutheran Church as church depends, the American conditions themselves make it apparent that is was not anymore understood and taken seriously. But not only on special occasions do American Lutherans, as the Scandinavians are wont to do, practice communion-fellowship with those of another persuasion, but one can, for instance, read in the church bulletin of one of the largest Lutheran churches of Philadelphia: "Members of other churches who believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and in the forgiveness of sin through Him are welcome to join with us in this sacred Sacrament." Instances could readily be adduced to show that in regard to pulpit-fellowship matters are still worse, which should cause every Lutheran theologian to blush for shame. But all this happens in churches that play a leading part in the Lutheran World Federation. Not in order to carry on polemics, but to understand the ailment of Lutheranism, to which vir-

tually all Lutheran churches in the world are prone, we state the objective and historic-dogmatical facts of the case, namely that the Lutheran Churches of our time — with exceptions which we do not want to mention here — that at least the leading churches of the world are not any longer churches in the light of the Formula of Concord. And if we hear the rejoinder that the Formula of Concord is not being accepted by all churches, that the Lutheran Church is the church of the *Augustana*, then we must join our fathers in answering that one can be a Lutheran without the Formula of Concord, but one cannot be a Lutheran in opposition to it. We must answer that the *Augustana* is no longer understood as Luther and the confessors of 1530 understood it if one no longer understands the *improbant secus docentes* of its Article X as a demarcation line of the church, but only as a boundary line of the theological school. This, then, is the dire need of our Church that in that very moment in which she begins to step before the world as one of the great Confessions of Christendom to testify to the world and to the Ecumenical Movement the truth of the Lutheran Reformation, she is about to lose, or to a great extent already has lost, that very truth.

## 3.

How are we to explain this need? Where are its roots? They cannot be sought in one country only. If German Lutheranism disintegrated through National-Socialism, if the Nordic State and Land Churches not influenced by National Socialism, and if the American Free Churches have also fallen prey to the disintegration of Lutheranism, then the cause must be sought in Lutheranism itself. It cannot possibly be found in the church politics of Calvinism. For then we would have to ask at once why the Lutheran Churches did no longer have that power of resistance which they had in the 16th and 17th century. We, of course, have to admit that the events in Lutheranism about which we are concerned also have their parallels in other creeds and therefore some of the reasons are at least to be sought in a development which is running through all of modern Christendom. The clearest example of this is the noteworthy fact that the present pope had to proceed with all means of Roman church discipline against certain excesses of the liturgical and the so-called *Una Sancta* movement, in which the dividing line separating from Protestantism also became doubtful for Catholics, even for truly pious Catholics so that they crossed it in conscious opposition to the canonical law. Did it not happen in the eastern parts of Germany — it had already happened in the Siberian prison camps of World War I — that Catholic communion was administered to Protestants? Without a doubt, a weakening of the fixed confessional boundary lines has come about in all of modern Christendom. The Ecumenical Movement has contributed its share, especially since its leadership has been transferred from the Anglicans, who were still interested in regulations and dogma, to the truly Reformed Churches. And

what would the fathers of the Faith-and-Order-Movement say to the fact that the great event of the World Council of Lausanne in 1927, the renewed acceptance of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Confession as the basis for the ecumenical work, was so rapidly by-passed in favor of what had now become the order of the day? But beyond this, there must be in Lutheranism itself a reason for the weakening of its dogmatical substance. In Germany it can be explained in part by the extinction of two theological generations. Whole families in which Lutheran theology and Lutheran faith were a living tradition, died out in the two World Wars. In America the decline of the German language played an important role. Not one of Luther's great writings on the Lord's Supper has been put into English. But this does not explain everything. Why were these writings not translated? Why do Anglo-Catholics and Roman Catholics believe in the real presence? Why do leading Scandinavian bishops — concerning those who are less renowned one knows nothing, at least they have not voiced their opinion — reject Luther's teachings on the Lord's Supper in their own church? One cannot explain all this by saying that the untenableness of Luther's exegesis has become apparent. For no serious-minded exegete, even in the Reformed Church, will understand the *est* of the words of the institution as *significat*. That was reserved for the Lutheran "dogmaticians" of today who know nothing of exegesis. The question also has to be raised whether the Benedictine esoteric theology, which was recently appraised by a German "Lutheran" theologian in the official organ of the German Lutheran bishops as the real meaning of the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper, has, after all, the least foothold in the Holy Scriptures. — No, this whole decadence of Lutheran doctrine must have another reason for which there is no rational explanation. It is the dying away of a faith which hides itself, as many another decline in the spiritual life of Christendom, behind a theological trend which seems to be on the up-grade. And as is the case with every decline in Christian life, so also this one goes hand in hand with a shocking weakness of character. To put it very frankly: The present-day theologians do no longer believe what they say and do no longer say what they believe. What great characters were the liberals of the past century who in public worship refused to confess the Apostolic Creed, because they did not any more believe some of its pronouncements! Today no theologian stumbles over such thin threads. We have no Sydow, Schrempf, or Knote incident any more; not because our times have a greater desire for dogma, but because theologians are no longer serious-minded in regard to their own confession and to confession as such. This is true despite all confessional movements of our times. No confessional church would dare to exclude one from its midst who denies the Trinity or the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. And that heresy has not yet been discovered which would compromise a pastor in one of our Lutheran Land churches. At the most it could only be the very untimely and inopportune loyalty

to the Formula of Concord. Here, of course, all tolerance ceases and for no other reason than that it would involve insubordination toward a practically unconfessional church government. Proudly our churches acknowledge the fact that errorists are no longer being disciplined. They do not suspect that they are leaving it to Rome to defend the fundamental truths of the Apostolic and the Nicene Creeds without which there is no Church. And they do not realize that thereby they are placing themselves into an impossible contrast to the Scriptures, which, as is well known, very earnestly war against heresy and urge such warfare upon the Church of all times. What would have become of the Church if she had not taken up arms against the heresies of the second, fourth, and sixteenth centuries, but had hoped, as present-day bishops are doing, that of itself the truth would carry the day.

Thus it is a serious weakness which has befallen our Church, and which is undoubtedly to be associated with the fate of Christendom as such. God has not blessed Christianity with a new revival as He had done in the decades following the Napoleonic era. It may be that it will come yet, but till now we are not aware of it. The spiritual life of the Catholic Church of the world, excepting in a few countries like Germany, which, however, are not being heard, shows signs of an apparent decline. The present pope when elected in 1939 was one of the intellectuals of Europe. Today, because of his political undertakings and his superstitious belief in the Madonna of Fatima as the liberator from Bolshevism, he has lowered himself to the level of a Pius IX. What human respect did one have in the twenties for the preachers of the social gospel in the Reformed Churches of America! They at least had the courage of an independent conviction. Today they have that conviction which the daily press may momentarily have, which, so to speak, is no conviction at all. Where in the independent America is there a Reformed churchman who has the power and the courage with which Karl Barth as a lone "voice in Switzerland" spoke to his people and its church? There were men in the Reformed world who once spoke so courageously against the destruction of the dignity of man and the disregard of human rights in National Socialism. Where are the men today who now do not criticize Communism only, but also oppose, in no uncertain terms, the trampling underfoot of people in Spain and by Latin-American Neo-Fascism? There were such voices, but they are silenced. — No, the appearance of Christendom today is everything else but uplifting, even in the most elevating moments of a convention like that of Amsterdam. The need of the Lutheran Church is *mutatis mutandis* the need of all churches.

## 4.

We must keep all of this in mind when putting the question: what is to be done? What *are we to do*, dear brethren, who have been intrusted with the ministerial office of the Lutheran Church



in times so decisive for the Church and the world? Nothing would be more wrong than if we would wait for that which others will do. The World Conference will take its course in accordance with the law by which it was guided at the outset. We cannot expect it to know what the church of the Formula of Concord is, and to act accordingly. This does not imply that we do not support and aid it everywhere where we are able to do so. From it we can expect an inner renewal of Lutheranism as little as from any other ecclesiastical organization, not even from the organization of our own church. Also from our bishops, synods, church-presidents, and faculties we can expect nothing, nothing at all. We are not to wait for an extraordinary miracle, for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. That would be altogether un-Lutheran. If God should once more grant us a revival and thereby a renewal of our church, that rests with God's omnipotence alone. That which we are able to do is threefold. First of all we can make ourselves see the status of our church and of Christendom. We must understand, of course, that the question is not how the legendary 80 million Lutherans of the world, who really are not in existence but have been invented by exceedingly superficial and thoughtless statistics, can be merged into a powerful organism. We must know, however, how those can be congregated from the midst of that poor, stricken, and feeble Lutheranism for whom the Lutheran Confession is not a mere pretence, but, as it was for Luther and the signatories of the Confessions, a matter of life and death, of eternal life and eternal death, because it is a matter pertaining to the everlasting truth of the Holy Scriptures, which concerns all peoples and all churches of Christendom. Indeed, not such a one thinks and acts in an ecumenical fashion who looks upon the Confessions as something relative, who reduces them to a low level and practically does away with them, but who, like Luther, searches for the one truth of the one Gospel for the one Church. Let us again become *confessional Lutherans* for the sake of the unity of the Church.

The second thing that we must do to attain this end and the thing that we can do without difficulty, is that we again study the Confessions, that we again and again compare them with the Holy Scripture, and that we constantly learn to gauge their interpretation of the Scriptures and their Scripture proofs more profoundly. As the Roman Catholic has the daily duty to read his breviary, a tedious and difficult task, thus our duty must be, next to the thorough study of the Scriptures, the unflagging study of the Confessions. In this manner let us begin prayerfully to read Luther's Large Catechism, even as Luther, although an old Doctor, still was not ashamed to pray the Catechism daily. The deepest cause for the failure of the German church conflict is none other but that everyone always spoke about the Confessions, appealed to them, but knew them too little. We do not only need this insight for ourselves, our teaching, and our preaching, but very much so for our congregations. At the last large convention of the



United Lutheran Church in America an engineer made the statement, by the way in agreement with the president of the church, Dr. Fry, that the church is in need of theologians, that it calls for theologians. The Christian congregation of the present day in all lands and of all creeds is tired of the undogmatical, devotional character of the ethical sermon, which changes its theme every year. It demands in a manner which we pastors frequently do not at all understand a substantial dogmatical sermon, a doctrinal sermon in the best sense of the word. If our contemporaries do not find it in the Lutheran Church, then the hunger for doctrine drives them into other denominations. Therefore lay hold on the Confessions, dear brethren in the ministry, by yourselves and together with others.

The third thing, however, that we must learn anew is Luther's invincible faith in the power of the means of grace. Whatever the Church still has and still does should not be minimized. But she does not live from mercy, or from political and social activity. She does not subsist on large numbers. When will the terrible superstition of the Christendom of our day cease that only there Jesus Christ is powerful where two or three millions are gathered together in His name! When will we again comprehend that the Church lives by the means of grace of the pure preaching of the Gospel and by the divinely instituted administration of the Sacraments and by nothing else. And for no other reason but because Jesus Christ the Lord is present in His means of grace and builds His Church on earth, being even as powerful as ever before in the history of the Church — even if His power and glory, to speak with our Confessions, are *cruce tectum*, hidden under the Cross. Oh, what a secret unbelief and what little faith we find in the Church which calls herself the Church of the *sola fide*! May God in His grace eradicate this unbelief and strengthen this little faith in our souls and renew us through the great faith of the New Testament and the Reformation. That and that alone is the manner of overcoming the urgent need of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the greatest and weightiest crisis of her history.

To all of you, whether I am acquainted with you or whether you are strangers to me, wherever you may be sojourners, in whichever Lutheran Church you may be serving, I in the fellowship of the Lutheran faith extend my most heartfelt greetings for the Advent Season and for the beginning of the New Church Year.

Your devoted and faithful  
HERMANN SASSE

Translated by P. Peters. (*Quartalschrift*, April, 1949, pp. 81—95.)

[NOTE. Dr. P. Peters rendered a service to the Lutherans of America by translating the remarks of Dr. Sasse, and the *Quartalschrift* is to be thanked for publishing this English version and for inviting other journals to copy it. Dr. Sasse takes for granted that EKiD (Evangelical Church in Germany) is a church, while many other German theologians look upon it as a mere federation. We trust that this point will gradually be fully clarified. A.]

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## Theological Observer

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**Luther and Dry Kansas.** — In the May 7, 1949, issue of *America*, William Brennan, S. J., presents a downright curious comment on the perennial struggle between the American wets and dries.

He gives a somewhat oversimplified description of the theology which caused prohibitionists to outlaw alcohol. "Fermentation is decay, corruption of nature, and consequently evil."

"The full import of the principle lies in its argument that a creature of God is intrinsically evil, rather than placing moral evil in man's improper use of that creature. There is an abyss of difference between these two theories of evil in the world. Millions of people who share the name of Christian embrace one or other of them.

"Behind the prohibitionists' fundamental principle, and behind the people who have argued eloquently on behalf of a 'dry' Kansas, stands the figure of a man whose writings and teachings have filtered down through the network of many, many generations. He is the historic figure who preached that man's nature became essentially evil after the fall of Adam, incapable of cooperating to achieve justification in the sight of God. He is the man who, by proclaiming man's nature to be basically vitiated, opened the door to the theory that others of God's creatures could also be basically evil.

"That person is Dr. Martin Luther, whose shadow loomed large in the liquor controversy in Kansas."

For Lutherans this discussion is humorous on two counts. The first is that Lutherans had very little to do with making Kansas dry. No poll has been made of Lutheran sentiment now that the State has returned to local option; certainly Father Brennan has not made one.

The other humorous point is that Luther would be the last man in the world to get caught on the side of the dries. Lutherans have been if anything somewhat embarrassed by his gusty enjoyment of life. For him the freedom of the Christian man involved taking Psalm 104 literally. Martin Luther taught not merely original sin, but — Father Brennan will not understand this — he taught the new birth of the Christian man through Christ to a life of full enjoyment of God's good gifts.

Somehow the dizziness that pervades the reader as he seeks to follow Father Brennan's history seems appropriate to the subject.

R. R. C.

**"A Logically Concatenated Explication of an Absolutized Bible."** — The attention of our readers has before this been drawn to *Religion in Life*, a Christian quarterly, now appearing in its 18th volume. It is published by the Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 155th Avenue, N. Y. In the first number of the current volume appeared a review article of the book issued in 1947 *What Lutherans Are Thinking* (all copies of which, we have been informed, have been

sold). The author of the article is the Rev. Joseph Sittler, Ph. D., D. D., professor of Systematic Theology, Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary, Maywood, Ill. The review is partly favorable, partly critical. There are one or two sentences in it which we should like to submit to the readers of this journal for purposes of self-examination. We are sure that all of us are agreed it is always wise that a person sees himself as others see him. The sentences in question read thus: "The very impressiveness of its scholarly and systematic achievements are no longer to blind the mother church of the Reformation to the deepening cleft between the faithful nature of its religious gifts and assertions, and its fundamentally rationalistic theological articulation. The Reformation's religious dynamism has been rather too generally reduced to a logically concatenated explication of an absolutized Bible."

This is a severe judgment on the present status of theological thinking and teaching in conservative Lutheran circles in America. The author does not mean to hurt, we are sure; he is speaking his honest mind and wishes to help those Lutherans with whom he does not agree. But it must be admitted that he delivers heavy blows. If what he says is correct, confessional Lutherans should hurry to change their outlook and their whole theological approach.

It will be seen that there are two accusations contained in the sentences quoted. One charges that the Holy Scriptures have been made an absolutized Bible. What the author has reference to seems to be the slogan of conservative Lutheranism: *sola Scriptura*. In all the religious debates since the days of the Reformation, Lutherans have carried on their warfare with the sword of Holy Scripture. What they have insisted on is that the Bible must decide all questions for us. Where the Scriptures have spoken, God Himself has spoken, and we have to bow. Human reason, speculation, tradition, the Church, the State, have no right to oppose themselves to the Bible as counter-authorities. The authority of the Scriptures is declared to be absolute. *Quod non est Biblicum, non est theologicum*, the fathers said. This has been the position of conservative Lutherans. Is it wrong? Can it be said that we are misleading ourselves and other people when we proclaim the absolute authority of the Scriptures? Is it wrong for us to insist on the inerrancy of the Bible? If taking this position constitutes a fault, we are guilty. But we are convinced that our Lord Jesus Christ is right when He says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but My words shall not pass away"; and when He tells His opponents, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me"; and "The Scripture cannot be broken."

There is, it must be admitted, a wrong way of making the Bible the absolute authority. Such a thing is not merely conceivable. It was done in the Middle Ages, when people used the Holy Scriptures in what might be called magical procedures, opening the Bible at random and thinking that the answer to their problems was contained in the words on which their eyes first fell when the

pages were turned. There is another wrong way of "absolutizing" the Scriptures against which we probably have not guarded as earnestly as we should. It consists in this, that one wrests Scripture passages out of their context and then makes them say things which in their connection they do not teach. It may be, furthermore, that here and there a person absolutizes the Scriptures by using them as a textbook in science and study of nature in general. While we believe that the Bible is true in everything it says, we strenuously assert that the Scriptures were not given us to form a textbook in matters of science, for instance, physics and chemistry, but that they were given us to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. It is conceivable, too, that somebody wrongly uses the Scriptures by swearing by a certain translation, Luther's or the Authorized Version, or another one. In that case not the Scriptures would be absolutized, but a particular translation. Strange to say, some people have spread the rumor that The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod considers Luther's translation of the Holy Scriptures infallible, with the result that in as far away a land as Palestine the writer of these comments heard a missionary say that according to the information which we had received The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod taught the verbal inspiration of Luther's version. That any such view of a version is wrong, all of our readers will grant at once. But while there are wrong ways of absolutizing the Scriptures, we state emphatically that we believe they are God's Word, that they are without error, and that they are our absolute authority in matters of faith and morals. This is nothing to be ashamed of; it agrees with Scripture teaching itself.

The other charge with which we are here concerned has to do with what is called a "logically concatenated explication." A further glimpse of what the author has in mind is granted us when he speaks of a "fundamentally rationalistic theological articulation." What does this signify? Evidently these words contain an attack on the dogmatical systems which Lutheran scholars have drawn up and which are quite impressive in size and in the methods employed. What he points to has frequently been called scholasticism. The great dogmatical works of the seventeenth century, those of Gerhard, Quenstedt, and Calov, are often declared to be representative of Protestant scholasticism, constituting an attempt to arrange all the teachings of the Bible in certain categories according to principles of logic that have been carefully defined. That the modern mind rebels somewhat against works like those of Quenstedt, with their formalistic logical and categorizing procedure, must be granted. It may be that these old Lutheran giants became somewhat enmeshed in methods of argumentation and presentation which we today find cumbersome and ineffective. But was it wrong that Lutheran theology, generally speaking, concerned itself with teachings which by logical processes are obtained from passages of the Holy Scriptures? The Bible comes to us in human speech. To understand it, one must apply the laws of language and of

human thought. If it were not so, we could not understand what God reveals. Hence the rules of ordinary logic are constantly employed when one reads the Holy Scriptures. That is true even of the wholly untutored reader. He finds in the Bible translation that he peruses his own speech and applies the everyday grammar and laws of thinking by which he himself is guided, without being aware of the precise nature of these mental processes. To use one's own mental faculties in this manner in order to arrive at a proper understanding of Holy Scripture is not sinful rationalizing; it is simply employing the abilities with which God has endowed human beings. When the attempt is made to arrange the various teachings of Holy Scripture in categories, then it is true, the danger arises that unholy rationalization will set in. Against that we have to guard.

Another caution requires mention. For us theologians who fully accept the authority of the Scriptures and their plenary inspiration there exists the pitfall that we make our study of the Scriptures chiefly an exercise in acute, logical, and effective argumentation, treating the teachings submitted there much in the same way as we employ propositions and theorems in geometry, or as a lawyer employs the decisions handed down by judges and courts in the past and collected in voluminous compendiums. Whatever amount of logical acumen the Creator has endowed us with, must be utilized, to be sure; but what a pity if the waters of life are handled by us mainly for tests and demonstrations in mental chemical analysis. They are meant for parched human beings traveling through a desert, not for the scientific laboratory. In speaking of "a logically concatenated explication" Dr. Sittler may advert to some misuse of the Scriptures of this nature.

Much akin is another fault which easily besets us. It consists in forgetting that Christ is the center of God's revelation and that all theology is sterile which does not constantly bear in mind Paul's statement 1 Cor. 2:2, "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified." What made Luther's teaching so dynamic and effective was the constant endeavor to remain in touch with the heart of all divine teaching, the message of Christ, the divine Redeemer. Where a theologian follows in the footsteps of Paul and Luther, the mere, formalistic, lifeless, and, alas, often heartless concatenation of prooftexts from the Scriptures will be avoided.

May we mention another way in which a sinful use of our reason may be brought on the scene. It appears when we think we have to explain rationally the great truths that God has revealed to us. We teach, for instance, that Baptism is a means of grace. In meditating on this teaching we are in danger of submitting as divinely given our own speculations as we endeavor to explain how Baptism may be conceived as communicating to us divine blessings. By doing this we violate the majesty of God's Word, adding to it things that are the product of our own little minds. If such rationalizing is criticized, we concur.



If the author's intention is, however, to castigate the course which conservative Lutheranism has always followed, that of taking the great Scripture passages and obtaining from them the teaching which they contain and proclaiming this in its fullness, rejecting at the same time the views that human speculation in the course of time has submitted as supplementing the divine teachings, we do not agree with him.

There are excrescences and abuses that must be avoided; but if Lutheranism desires to remain true to itself, it must continue to practice loyalty to the *Sola Scriptura* on its flag and to interpret faithfully and to apply humbly the dicta of our great God. A.

**Spain and Religious Liberty.** — When certain spokesmen of Spain, the country where the Inquisition celebrated its chief triumphs, discuss the attitude of their nation toward Protestants, one wonders whether sweet light, peace, and a decent respect for consciences have entered in where formerly autos-da-fé struck terror into all nonconformist hearts. Let the reader peruse this report of the *RNS* on remarks made by a Spanish representative in Jersey City, N. J.

"There is no such thing as a 'Protestant problem' in Spain, according to Pablo Merry del Val, cultural counsellor to the Spanish legation in Washington, D. C. Speaking before a St. Peter's College group here, the diplomat denied that Protestants were suffering persecution in Spain. 'There is more freedom of religion in Spain,' he said, 'than there is in many countries inside and outside the United Nations.' He said that in Sweden, teachers must be Lutheran, and that the king and cabinet must also be Lutheran. 'In Sweden, Jews and Catholics are barred from office,' he added. 'In both Norway and Sweden the bishops are nominated by the kings. This is far more control than Spain even attempts over its own particular and ancient faith.'

"Merry del Val said it was true that Protestant processions were 'occasionally forbidden.' He explained that such demonstrations would be as unwise as a rally staged by American Catholics 'in the heart of the Ku Klux Klan belt in the South.' Conflicts between Catholics and members of evangelical groups took place most frequently, he said, when the latter approached Catholics with pamphlets attacking their Church. Merry del Val said that a Spaniard, when he left the Catholic Church, seldom joined another faith, preferring to remain outside all Churches. 'Strange as it may seem to you, and despite the propaganda to the contrary, there is practically a total lack of interest in other sects on the part of Spaniards,' he said."

These statements represent at best half-truths. Important facts are omitted. The speaker did not tell his audience of outrages committed in recent years in Spain against Protestant chapels; he did not point out that while in Sweden Roman Catholics can carry on mission work, Protestants are not accorded the same privilege in Spain. This is not written in the spirit of bitterness, but merely



in the desire to let the true facts become known. (Cf. C. T. M., Vol. XIX, 1948, p. 468, under the heading "Religious Intolerance in Spain.") A.

**Southern Baptist Convention.**— Baptist conventions may have many faults, but apparently they are not dull. Things happen, eloquent appeals are delivered, feelings are stirred, the atmosphere is charged with electricity. Baptists are highly individualistic. Having come into existence as a persecuted sect, the denomination has always treasured religious liberty and freedom from the control of the State. No strong ecclesiastical organization, which might exercise strict control and become tyrannical, is permitted to develop. These were our reactions when we read the article of Harold E. Fey, managing editor of the *Christian Century*, in the issue of this journal for June 1, 1949. Some of the chief facts which he reports are here submitted.

When the Southern Baptists during the last quarter of May met in Oklahoma City, this Southern capital was hard put to it in its efforts to provide quarters for the hosts that gathered. This is not surprising, for the denomination now numbers 26,822 churches and 6,491,981 members. Amazing are the figures for their Sunday schools. They have 4,308,374 pupils. "And a million persons are in training to instruct in such schools." The latter sentence means, according to our view, that a million persons are either teaching or preparing to teach. Robert G. Lee, a Fundamentalist and very successful pastor, was re-elected as chairman.

One question before the convention was whether churches which normally should belong to the Northern Convention could be received into the Southern group. California and Kansas had been added to the list of States in which the latter is represented. A convention in Oregon and Washington asked to be received into this fellowship, and after a long discussion this request was granted. The principle on which the convention acted was given this wording: "Because of the voluntary principles that prevail, churches, associations, and state conventions of Baptists may cooperate with whomever they will, irrespective of geographical location. . . . Because of moral interdependence of Baptist bodies, cooperation should take place wherever possible between all Baptist individuals, churches, association, and conventions. The general denominational bodies, furthermore, should themselves strive for mutual good will and understanding. This does not mean deviation from conviction, but recognizes that the Christian task is larger than any segment of its followers. . . . No compact or agreement may be formed with any organization, convention, or religious body that would place Southern Baptists in a compromising position, or would appear to be a step toward organic union with religious bodies that do not believe in or practice the aforesaid New Testament Baptist principles as set out in this report." Those who have followed developments in the various denominations of our country will at once see the significance of this statement of principles, which, we ought

to add, was adopted by the convention. Southern Baptists are conservative, and it seems that most of them belong to the so-called Fundamentalists. Northern Baptists show a different tendency. Generally speaking, the Northern Baptist Convention follows the flag of Modernism, and those of this group that are Fundamentalists in their theology face tremendous difficulties.

Mention was made at the convention that Northern Baptists are now considering the question whether they should merge with the Disciples of Christ. The view was expressed that such a step would be contrary to the principles of the New Testament. The convention itself passed no resolution pertaining to this matter. A motion that was seriously debated was to the effect that "no one who belongs to or affiliates with any state or local council of churches which is connected with or sponsored by the Intercouncil Field Department of the Federal Council, or any one or more of its six affiliated councils, shall be eligible to serve on any board, agency, or institution of this convention, either as an official, employee, or board member." According to Dr. Fey, this motion might have carried if it had not been for opposition to it voiced by the esteemed chairman, Dr. Robert G. Lee.

The next meeting of the Southern Baptists, believe it or not, will be held in Chicago, one of the strong centers of Northern Baptists. Still, Southern Baptists have 586 churches in Illinois. The chairman at once stated that the decision to meet in Chicago did not mean that Southern Baptists were attempting to draw away any churches from the Northern Baptist Convention. One big argument for the choice of Chicago as a convention city was the necessity of obtaining accommodations for the large number of delegates constituting the convention. In Oklahoma City 10,000 delegates and their families had to be housed and fed. — Can business be transacted efficiently when the number of delegates is so huge? Plans have been proposed to curtail the number of representatives. While at present the convention follows "the simple townmeeting process," it is urged that business henceforth should be delegated to an annual "administrative convention," "consisting of one representative from each of the one thousand district associations." However, there does not seem to be a live prospect that the proposed change will be adopted. Baptists love freedom and democracy, even though, as Dr. Fey puts it, what they have now is a pretense at democracy. Strict democracy, of course, would mean that all the members of Baptist churches assemble, which naturally would be a physical impossibility and a very grotesque affair, if it could be inaugurated. Southern Baptists, when one looks at the denomination as a whole, still preach Christ and Him Crucified, and in that we rejoice. A.

**On Snake-handling and Poison-drinking.** — It was a gracious promise which Jesus gave His disciples shortly before His ascension when He said about His followers: "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them," Mark

16:18. To the Seventy He had said, when they returned from their mission: "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you," Luke 10:19. With sadness one observes the misuse of these words of our gentle, loving Savior by ignorant, fanatical, would-be, or probably even actual, adherents. The promise of protection in danger and persecution they make the basis of demonstrations, hurling themselves into perilous situations. At times one of these people sees the error of his ways. RNS brings an interesting item that is apropos.

"Gordon Miller, one-time minister of a snake-handling, poison-drinking 'Free Will Church of God' cult in Northwest Georgia and Tennessee, has renounced his former weird activities in favor of a more orthodox church. Miller issued a statement as follows: 'I have reached the conclusion that it does not serve God's purpose to handle live snakes or to tempt Him by drinking poisons. I am done with that sort of practice.' Miller said he is now aligned with the Church of God of the Union Assembly. Miller attracted national attention in 1947 when he was tried for involuntary manslaughter in the death of one of his congregation, Ernest Davis, a 33-year-old Taylorsville, Ga., farmer, who died after drinking a 'salvation cocktail' containing strychnine at one of Miller's Free Will Church of God revivals. Superior Court Judge Claude H. Porter dismissed the charge against Miller after ruling Davis drank the 'cocktail' of his own volition. News service and magazine representatives flocked to a subsequent pasture meeting of the cult, where members of the dead man's family and Miller handled live snakes."

A.

**Northern Presbyterians.**—The last week of May saw the Presbyterian Church U.S.A., usually called Northern Presbyterians, convened in its annual convention at Buffalo, N.Y. As appears almost inevitably these days, one of the questions that were given attention was that of union with other bodies. The Southern Presbyterians were asked to join the Presbyterians of the North in the attempt to bring about a merger of all the bodies that stand on the Reformed platform.

The denomination has grown; it consists of 8,534 churches and 2,274,259 members. In a financial way, too, it has forged ahead. When one compares what amounts were given during the last two years for benevolent purposes with the amounts that were contributed before that period, one finds an increase of 42 per cent. In one respect the leadership was disappointed: The Church did not make its budget, and this has happened four times in succession. The explanation seems to be that the budget adopted was too high. To remedy conditions, the so-called self-allocation plan was adopted. This plan has the advantage that the differences in financial ability between the various congregations are recognized.

Of special interest was the theological debate that arose. A ruling elder of the Church, a physician, contended that since the West-

minster Confession and Catechisms are never read by the average church member and since these documents contain things that no one accepts any longer, as he averred, for instance, the doctrine of election as applied to infants who die while they are in this tender age, he expressed the view that subscription of the old standards should no longer be required and that the short Statement of Faith drawn up in 1902 should be substituted. But the Assembly did not agree with him; after some discussion his proposal was rejected. A.

**Concerning Episcopalian Unity.** — One of the well-known facts about the Protestant Episcopal Church is that there are various schools or parties in it, the High Church, the Low Church, and the Broad Church parties. More caustic and correct is this characterization which has been given some currency: "High and crazy, low and lazy, broad and hazy." What we personally know about members of the Low Church party, who are often called "the evangelical group in the Protestant Episcopal Church," does not justify the epithet "lazy." The Broad Church, moreover, is not merely hazy in its pronouncements, it is downright Modernistic. With interest one reads the RNS report of a speech delivered by a prominent Protestant Episcopal thinker and writer. "Episcopalians must achieve unity among themselves before they talk of unity with other Churches," Dr. Bernard Iddings Bell, consultant on education and religion for the Chicago diocese, declared in Boston.

"Dr. Bell addressed 200 clerical and lay delegates to the annual meeting of the Protestant Episcopal Church Congress. The Congress is an unofficial church body that debates issues that may come up later at General Conferences of the Church. Calling for a restatement of basic Anglican beliefs and an end to 'disunity' in the Church, Dr. Bell urged caution in any approach to mergers with other denominations. He said that the 'danger' in the Protestant Episcopal Church 'originates from those who wish immediately to associate with American Protestantism in ways which involve a surrender of the Anglican heritage and an acceptance instead of a position incompatible with that which justifies our continued existence.' The Episcopal Church, he added, was divided by 'apparent indifference on the part of many Episcopalians, some of them in high places, to the basic theology of historic Christendom, indeed, to all theology.' Those who advocate thoughtless, ecumenical love feasts simply do not know the creeds and the sacramental confusion of those with whom they would associate us. This small minority does us a lot of harm. To promote inner unity we must stop courting other religious bodies until we can make up our minds what, if anything, we have to bring to them as a possible dowry. Let us stop all talk of church unity with Presbyterians and Methodists and the rest until we can get church unity at home to avoid sounding ridiculous.' He called for a study of the basic books and beliefs of the Church and the cultivation of the life of the spirit." A.

**The Present Situation in Jerusalem.**—While an armistice is in force between the new State Israeli and the Arabs, prospective pilgrims must be warned that they probably, if they come to Palestine, will be excluded from areas where formerly anybody could visit. A part of the city of Jerusalem is in the hands of the Jews, the remainder is occupied by Arab forces. It seems that the latter are in control of the old city, the section located within the ancient picturesque walls; the Jews, generally speaking, are masters of the new city, containing comfortable hotels, up-to-date business houses, elegant theaters, and many fine residences. This new city is ordinarily inhabited chiefly by Jews; hence it is natural that their army should here hold sway. For the Easter festival, when normally many thousand pilgrims pass through the old gates and visit the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and other venerated spots, only about fifty were permitted by the Arabs to enter the city and to worship at the place which tradition designates as the locale of Christ's burial and resurrection. The usual Good Friday procession, which starts at Gethsemane on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, enters at the so-called St. Stephen's Gate at the northeast corner of the old walled area, and then follows the Via Dolorosa till the traditional site of Calvary and of the Holy Sepulcher is reached, was permitted to be held. Strange to say, it was made unpleasant for the participants by showers of rain and cold weather—features which are unusual in Jerusalem in the middle of April. It is symptomatic of the nature of conditions that the Moslems did not undertake their annual pilgrimage to the so-called Tomb of Moses, located in defiance of Biblical narrative on the west side of the Dead Sea in the wilderness of Judea. This pilgrimage falls about the time of the Christian Easter festival and seems to have been inaugurated as a countermove to the impressive Christian ceremonies, which, after all, are bound to have some influence on the thinking of the Arab population. The Samaritans, too, were not able to conduct their ancient Passover ceremonies on Mount Gerizim, rites to which they, though reduced to a mere handful of people, about two hundred in number, still passionately cling.

A.

#### **Brief Items from *Religious News Service***

##### **At Home**

First observance of National Leprosy Missions Week will take place next October 9—16, it was announced in New York by the American Mission to Lepers, Inc. Churches of forty-three Protestant denominations and non-denominational groups whose foreign mission boards co-operate with the American Mission in maintaining 125 leprosy stations in twenty-nine countries, will serve during the week as focal centers for special prayers and offerings. Among the Protestant mission boards co-operating with the American Mission are those of five Baptist churches, the Congregational-Christian churches, five Lutheran bodies, five Presbyterian, and the Protestant Episcopal, Methodist, and Reformed churches.



Northern Baptists have contributed \$15,008,000 to date to the denomination's \$16,000,000 World Mission Crusade launched two years ago, it was reported in San Francisco to the annual meeting of the Northern Baptist Convention.

A School on World Order was held at Hartwick College in Oneonta, New York, from June 27 to July 1, under the sponsorship of the Board of Social Missions of the United Lutheran Church in America, in conjunction with Hartwick College and the Lutheran Social Fellowship. Programs of study and action for use of local congregations were developed by church leaders attending the school, who will be prepared to offer help in conducting these programs in their home synods.

Archbishop Richard J. Cushing of Boston and Dr. Luther A. Weigle of New Haven, Conn., retiring dean of Yale Divinity School, were honored in Boston for rendering "distinguished service to boyhood" by the National Council, Boy Scouts of America. The Council, meeting in Boston for its thirty-ninth annual convention, presented the two religious leaders with the Silver Buffalo award, made annually on the basis of noteworthy service to boyhood of a national or international character. Dr. George J. Fisher, National Scout Commissioner, presided.

The Lutheran Welfare Society of Minnesota has inaugurated a clinical training program aimed at placing staff pastors in mental hospitals and other state and private institutions. The plan seeks to "mesh the gears" of the ministry, the medical profession, social case work, and institutional work. Basic elements of the program are the application of Scriptural resources to physical and mental illnesses, orientation of pastors to fields related to the ministry, study of the principles of psychology and psychiatry and education in making case studies. Under the supervision of the Rev. Fredric Norstad, director of chaplaincy services for the Society, a full-year course of in-service training is being given pastors who will become institutional staff chaplains. The initial class of ten pastors is now spending three months at the state mental hospital in Hastings, Minnesota.

Fifteen thousand students are expected to attend the Summer School of Catholic Action, which will be conducted in eight cities between June 13 and September 3 this year. This figure was given in St. Louis by the Rev. Thomas S. Bowdern, S. J., director of the enterprise, which is sponsored by the central office of the Sodality of our Lady. Titles of some of the courses to be given at the Summer School are: Secret of Sanctity; Tools for Human Relationships; Comic Books, Magazines, Movies; Courtship; Communism; and The Catholic Answer to the Social Problem.

First Dutch Reformed Church of Raritan, more familiarly known in New Jersey as the Old First Church of the Freling-



huysens, observed its 250th anniversary. Parent congregation of all the Dutch Reformed churches in the Raritan River Valley, the Old First opened in 1699, when an itinerant preacher of the Dutch Reformed faith responded to the religious needs of the few scattered settlers in this vicinity. The first pastor was Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen from Amsterdam, Holland, who came to the church late in 1719 or early in 1720. The first church building, erected a short time later, was a log structure which served until it was destroyed by the British in the Revolutionary War.

Dr. Walter C. Langsam, president of Wagner College in Staten Island, New York, announced that the Institute had been authorized by the New York Board of Regents to grant the degree of bachelor of religious education. Wagner thus becomes the only liberal arts college in the state authorized to grant the degree. Wagner, a college of the United Lutheran Church, will award the degree to students majoring in religious education in preparation for lay church work or social work.

More than a billion dollars worth of new Protestant church buildings and improvements are now being planned by architects throughout the country, according to Dr. Elbert M. Conover, director of the Interdenominational Bureau of Architecture in New York. Dr. Conover attributed "this overwhelming volume" of planning to the fact that little church building was accomplished during the depression and war years. Other factors, he said, are the "tremendous" increase of interest in week-day religious education, week-day schools for kindergarten youngsters, church recreational activities, and the growth of pastoral counseling. He further explained that very few congregations are accepting extreme, modernistic exterior designs, but are holding the designs which may be called "churchly."

A Graduate School for the Laity will be launched this summer at Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary at Maywood to provide qualified workers for parishes, schools, institutions, and agencies of the church, which are "increasingly claimant for trained men and women." A summer session will be held from July 18 to August 5 for student counselors, church councilmen, Christian workers, pastors' wives, social workers, and teachers. In addition, thirty courses in the Biblical, theological, historical, and functional field will be offered during the regular academic year, leading to the degree of Master of Arts.

Presbyterian clergymen who engage in full-time secular employment for two years may be "relieved" of their ministerial status, according to an overture adopted in Buffalo, New York, by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. The overture, which now goes to the 267 prebyteries of the denomination for ratification, is expected to affect 1,500 ministers. Terms of the overture are: "If a minister, not retired because

of physical disability or because he has reached the age of retirement, enters full-time employment in a secular occupation, he may, after two years, be deemed to have left the ministry, and the presbytery, either at his request or on its own initiative, after due investigation of the circumstances, may relieve him of ministerial duties and erase his name from the roll. Such minister, not being under censure, may later apply for reinstatement, and the presbytery may reinstate him and restore his name to the roll if it be satisfied that such action should be taken."

More than 200 persons attended a field and seed blessing service at Zion Lutheran Church in Perry Township, Pennsylvania. The service began in the church and was continued, following a procession, in a wheat field adjoining the church yard. The Rev. Samuel K. Kistler, pastor, and the Rev. C. A. Steigerwalt, pastor of the Friedensburg Lutheran parish, Schuylkill County, presided. It was the fourth annual local revival of the rite, which originated in Germany more than 150 years ago.

A warning that Protestantism will lose rural areas "to the Holy Rollers and the Roman Catholic Church" unless it solves the problems of pulpit vacancies and competition, was sounded in Buffalo, New York, by Dr. Jesse Hays Baird of San Anselmo, California.

Twenty-three Protestant churches in the Peoria area are planning a "Christian day school" to be opened next September under the sponsorship of the National Association of Christian Schools. Church leaders in Peoria are making surveys to determine the number of prospective students. There will be eight primary grades, meeting all state requirements. So far, parents have reacted favorably to the idea, it was said.

A total of 9,716,251 copies of the Scriptures in 151 languages were distributed throughout the world in 1948 by the American Bible Society, it was reported by Dr. Eric M. North, general secretary. Distribution abroad, in more than forty countries, totaled 5,668,336 copies, Dr. North said, and 4,047,915 copies were placed in the United States.

Lotteries, chances, and "other mild gambling devices" at Episcopal church bazaars and fairs were condemned by the Rt. Rev. Granville G. Bennett, Bishop of Rhode Island.

#### Abroad

The Church has a duty to participate in political and social matters, Lutheran Bishop Hanns Lilje of Hanover told a conference of sixty German and foreign clergymen, politicians, journalists, and publishers. The group assembled at the bishop's invitation for a five-day gathering at the Evangelical Academy at Hermannsburg to discuss the general theme of "Social and Political Ethics." Bishop Lilje declared, "The Church should readily

take part in political responsibility, while using discretion so as not to deliver itself into the hands of a single political system."

Britain's Methodist Church has lost ground among coal mining communities which were formerly Methodist strongholds, according to the results of a questionnaire sent out by the denomination's home missions department to 213 circuits. Replies showed that whereas increased interest in Methodism was shown in forty-two coal mining areas, there was decline of interest in sixty-three and a marked decline in thirty-eight others. All those questioned agreed that the proportion of miners touched by the Methodist Church is "very low." Most replies stated that Communism is not so serious an enemy to the churches as some church people thought. Lack of interest in the churches, the replies indicated, is due to counter-attractions as racing and drinking, to which the miners turn for escape from life's problems. According to the Rev. Colin Roberts, secretary of the home missions department, eighty per cent of the British population is indifferent to religion.

Czechoslovakia's Ministry of Education has begun publication of *The Catholic Clergy Gazette*, a new weekly bulletin intended for distribution among the country's Roman Catholic priests. Purpose of the bulletin, according to *Rude Pravo* (Red Right), organ of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, is "to present not only general news and correct misinformation which often circulates, but to give the clergy information regarding new directives by government bodies affecting the church."

A statement on the duties of membership in the Church of England was received in London by the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury and ordered sent to a committee for study. The statement, which was transmitted by the Upper House of the Convocation, set forth seven obligations which it said should govern Anglican church membership. First, to go to church at least once on Sunday; second, to receive Holy Communion regularly, and especially at Christmas, Easter, and Whitsunday; third, to be regular in daily prayer; fourth, to read the Bible regularly and seek to understand better the faith and teaching of the church; fifth, to follow the example of Christ in everyday life, and witness bravely to the faith by word and deed; sixth, to give personal service to the church, to neighbors, and to the community; and seventh, to give money regularly, according to means, for the support of one's own parish and diocese, and for the work of the church at home and overseas.

Forty Christian youth delegates from seventeen countries enrolled for a series of lectures and discussions on contemporary problems at the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches near Geneva. The courses were conducted from May 9 to June 2. The conference was arranged in co-operation with representatives of the World Christian Youth Commission, which

embraces the Youth Department of the World Council of Churches, the World's Y. M. C. A., the World's Y. W. C. A., the World Student Christian Federation, and the World Council of Christian Education. Main topics were: "Forces Molding the Present Generation of Youth," "The Message of the Bible," "Reconciliation through the Churches," "Relevant Christian Ethics," and "Faith in Action."

More than 125 American Protestant missionaries have decided to remain at their posts in various parts of Fukien Province, according to Paul Winant, an architect and engineer for the Methodist Church in China. Winant said the missionaries include forty Methodists and thirty Congregationalists in northern Fukien and fifty-eight of various denominations in the south.

4,000,000 copies of the Scriptures and Scripture portions, printed in 784 languages, were distributed during the past year by the British and Foreign Bible Society. The Rev. A. H. Wilkinson, general secretary, told the Society's annual meeting that Spanish customs authorities had again barred the entry of Scriptures.

The Church must utter "a loud and unconditional no" to the Soviet way of life, Dr. Emil Brunner declared in London at the 117th annual assembly of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. "To follow the policy of appeasement in regard to the Communist challenge," Dr. Brunner asserted, "is the way of death. The Church must beware of being hypocritical. We are witnessing the last phases of a decline of an over-secularized West, and only a resurgence of Christian culture and values can give Western man a reinvigoration."

Grants amounting to \$80,000 have been made by the U. S. A. Committee for the Lutheran World Federation to assure continued publication of church periodicals in Germany's eastern zone and the Christian weekly known as the *Sonntagsblatt*, which is published under the sponsorship of Bishop Hanns Lilje of Hanover.

Bishop A. R. Beverley denounced the proposed appointment of a Canadian envoy to the Vatican in an address before the Toronto diocesan synod of the Church of England in Canada. He said he was opposed to "the recognition of the Roman Church as a political power, or of the Vatican as a state," and to the "granting of special status or special privilege to the Roman Church or to any church."

